The Theatre

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* *Signifies a first production* † *a revival.*

THE THEATRE.

JULY, 1897.

Our Watch Tower.

THE PROGRESS OF THE PLAYER.

IN our last issue we drew attention to the peculiar significance of Sir Henry Irving's reading of *Becket* at Canterbury Cathedral. Of this incident, by the way, an admirable account, written by the special correspondent of a morning newspaper, will be found on another page. Long estranged from each other by misunderstanding on both sides, the Church and the Stage have begun to recognise the fact that within certain well-defined limits they may join hands to good advantage for the national well-being, and the invited presence of a player in the restored Chapter House of what for so many centuries has been the chief of English Cathedrals may be taken as a sufficient proof that the old irrational prejudice against his profession is beginning to die away. It is seen that the Stage, directly or indirectly, exercises an influence inferior only to that of a free Press. No one is more alive to this than the Dean of Canterbury, who asked Sir Henry Irving to give the reading in question, and who is followed in his large-mindedness and foresight by a considerable section of the new clergy. Nothing was wanting to the impressiveness of that reading; the actor was fully himself, and the fortuitous pealing of an anthem in the Cathedral as his task drew to a close must have struck the least imaginative and sentimental of his hearers.

Unfortunately, the old spirit of bigotry and intolerance as to the Stage is not yet extinct. It is at once instructive and amusing to observe the way in which the reading at Canterbury was treated by certain religious papers. Some years ago, we remember, a distinguished prelate, being asked to accept a stall at a theatre famous for purely intellectual entertainment, said that he wished very much to be present, but was "afraid of what the *Record* and the *Rock* might say. You are engaged in a great work, I know; but I am simply powerless in the matter."

Probably he would find reason to repeat this to-day. How have the religious papers treated Sir Henry Irving's reading in the Chapter House at Canterbury? Except the *Illustrated Christian News*, which gives us almost a full-page illustration of it, the religious papers show a marked tendency to minimise the importance of the event. One has but a brief report; another ignores the incident altogether. Nor is this surprising. "Many thanks," writes another distinguished prelate in answer to a request for an article on the subject, "for your kind note. I think I must not follow out your interesting suggestion. I have to consider the effect of everything I say or write all round. Almost the whole Evangelical party dread the Stage, and condemn those who in any way support it; and I should only succeed in raising a hornets' nest, and lessening what little influence I possess." It may strike not a few of us that such a state of feeling as this letter indicates should exist at the present day. Most of the religious papers, it is clear, have yet much to learn, a greater breadth of view to acquire. The Stage is no less permanent an institution than any Church; it sways countless minds; and if at times it has appealed to a depraved taste—a fact which, as our readers are aware, we have never concealed or attempted to conceal—the interests of religion, as of civilisation generally, demand that where it is worthy of itself it should receive the utmost recognition and encouragement from the clergy. In 1877, we are reminded, the late Bishop of Manchester, Dr. Fraser, was fiercely assailed by a section of the Press because, taking as his text a little article by Mr. Oxenford in *The Theatre*, he had the boldness to stand up for such amusements. He might have complained, with Edmund Burke, "I am a little too much in advance of my time."

However, there are indications that we are fast approaching a better state of thought in this respect, the Evangelical party and its organs notwithstanding. The claims of acting to a place among the fine arts and our best educational influences are not to be withstood much longer, if, indeed, they have ever been seriously disputed by any thinking and unbiased people. Players have been buried in Westminster Abbey, but London was without a statue of a player until the 14th of June this year. On that date, Sir Henry Irving, escorted by the Dean of Hereford, unveiled such a memorial to Mrs. Siddons on Paddington-green, within a few hundred yards of her grave. It may be doubted whether a royal visit would have excited greater interest; the streets were decorated, and a large crowd assembled round the enclosure. Inside there was a representative

group, including Mr. Bancroft, Mr. Toole, Mr. George Grossmith, Mr. Hare, Mrs. Tree, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander, Miss Marion Terry, Mr. Edward Terry, Mr. F. R. Benson, Miss Nethersole, Sir Lewis Morris, Sir Arthur Arnold, Sir John Hassard, Sir John Aird, M.P., Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Mr. Bram Stoker, and several members of the Kemble family, two of whom had come from Italy to be present. The statue is a seated one in white marble, somewhat after Sir Joshua Reynolds's picture of the actress as the Muse of Tragedy. Sir Henry's speech, as might have been expected, was a happy combination of earnestness, humour, and aptness of expression. "London," he said, "is rich in statues, chiefly of people whom Nature did not expressly design to be immortalised in that particular way. Few men or women look well in marble or bronze, but to-day you see one of the ideal models of the sculptor's art, a great actress whose personal majesty is eloquent even in the silence of stone. It was said of Sarah Siddons by Hazlitt that 'She was not less than a goddess, or a prophetess inspired by the gods. Power was seated on her brow; passion radiated from her breast as from a shrine; she was tragedy personified.' I think you can catch the spirit of the panegyric from the impressive figure, so admirably designed and executed by M. Chavalliaud, which is set up in your midst to-day. By the acclamation of her contemporaries, Mrs. Siddons was hailed as the incarnation of the sublime in the expression of dramatic passion. I have lately read that this ideal of the sublime is a mere superstition belonging to a world of art and emotion which has definitely passed away. It will pass away when the creations of Shakspere become obsolete, when the highest poetry ceases to influence the soul of mankind, conditions which make the fulfilment of such a prophecy unspeakably remote. Methods of execution in art may vary from age to age; but in this monument you have a standard of conception which has made the name of Siddons imperishable. To some characters in Shakspere, such as Lady Macbeth and Volumnia, she gave a tradition which has not been effaced. Moreover, in honouring her memory you are paying a lasting tribute to a quality which is the perpetual stimulus to ambition in every walk of life. To every young man who looks upon this statue, I would say, 'This is not only the image of a great actress, it is the image of indomitable energy and perseverance. When she came to London first she was a conspicuous failure. She went back to the hard school of the provincial theatre, and matured her powers by unflagging industry. This is no memorial

of casual and irresponsible genius, but a triumphant witness to the merits of those comrades-in-arms of all true endeavour—application and a stout heart.' Another noteworthy point of this monument is that it is the first statue of a player which has been erected in London. I am not suggesting this as a precedent for the further embellishment of advantageous sites; but in itself it is a considerable portent. There are statues of Shakspere, and the dramatic profession does not forget that Shakspere was an actor, and that but for his connection with the Stage it is improbable that he would have enriched our dramatic literature. However, if it is for Shakspere the poet that we have raised trophies for triumphal show,—and we have before us to-day a striking proof of that public spirit which has sacrificed an ancient social prejudice in homage to a great actress, which needs no better evidence than the generous gift of the site by the Vestry of Paddington, together with their handsome provision of the basement of the statue,—this is a monument of enlightened tolerance which would have surprised most people in Sarah Siddons's lifetime. It shows, moreover, that the work and influence of the actor are not quite ephemeral. Mrs. Siddons died a very few years before our gracious Sovereign came to the throne, and amongst the evidences of that spread of ideas which has distinguished her Majesty's long and glorious reign, I think we may claim this permanent recognition of the genius of a woman who shed lustre upon her generation and stood pre-eminent amongst the race of great English actors." The vote of thanks to the donors was moved by the Dean of Hereford, who married a grand-niece of Mrs. Siddons (the bride being Fanny Kemble's daughter), and of whose remarkable collection of theatrical portraits at his house we gave a long account in *The Theatre* about two years ago. He was proud, he said, of his alliance with the Kemble family, and his city was proud of the fact that it had been the birthplace of Garrick and so many other illustrious players. The "ancient social prejudice" of which Sir Henry Irving spoke, and which at no remote time will probably be ranked with a belief in witchcraft as one of the curiosities of bygone ages, has received, therefore, another vigorous blow. The Stage requires no sort of patronage from the pulpit, but may at least expect that those who decry or slight it should to some extent realise facts, discriminate between the good and the bad, and give their support to anything like wholesome and instructive recreation. Looking to the honour just conferred upon Mr. Bancroft, we may hope that all this will be done before long.

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MISS ELLEN TERRY AS MME. SANS-GÊNE.

Portraits.

THE TWO MESDAMES SANS-GENE.

OUR portraits this month will be generally admitted, we imagine, to be of exceptional interest. They cannot, it is true, do more than show the outward seeming of the two distinguished actresses—one English and the other French—who in a short time will both be interpreting in London the part of the fascinating washerwoman whom the fortunes of the Revolution and First Empire periods elevated to the giddy heights of Court life under the little great man, so wonderfully portrayed at the Lyceum by Sir Henry Irving. They cannot, as a comparison of the two performances will do, bring out the points of contrast and the points of similarity in the two impersonations, show where the English actress gains over her rival from Paris, and in what respects the latter can claim the advantage. But all who are interested in acting should make the comparison and, when they have made it, these photographs will bring back to their minds the leading characteristics of each. In any case it is interesting to have side by side presentments of the two clever comédiennes, both dressed for a part in which they have both been seen to striking advantage. Madame Réjane, long the favourite of Paris audiences, was, of course, the first to don the cap and apron of Catherine Hubscher and the gorgeous but less comfortable robes of the Duchesse de Dantzig, and when it was announced that Miss Ellen Terry would follow her example in an English version of the play some hasty critics cried out against an actress of so poetic a temperament attempting a character of broad farce. But they forgot *Nance Oldfield* and Miss Terry's delightfully humorous acting in that bright little piece, and, when the Lyceum version of *Madame Sans-Gêne* saw the light, her rendering of the part was, as the less hasty foresaw clearly it would be, pronounced to be quite as clever, quite as amusing, and even more "charming" than that of Madame Réjane. Comparisons are proverbially odious, and we do not propose to draw one here. All lovers of acting, as we have said, should do so for themselves, and they may be certain that both performances will afford them a most enjoyable evening's entertainment, afford them much food for thought, and take an abiding place in their memories. It is not improbable that, in days to come, 1897 will be described as "the Madame Sans-Gêne year."

The Round Table.

LETTERS TO SOME DRAMATIC CRITICS.

To William Archer, Esq.

SIR,—You, as foreman of this grand inquest for our Sovereign Lady the Queen and—I beg you a thousand pardons, a habit of years ago ran away with me. Yet is the slip inappropriate only in this sense, that it places you too low in the estimation of at least one person. For I fancy that if I were to consult the critic of *The World* as to your proper position I should give you a place far more considerable than that of the foreman to any inquest, however grand. I should put you in the robes of Rhadamanthus and regard you as perpetual Lord Chief Justice of plays and actors. Whether, like the fisherman's wife in the Grimm story, you would not even after this go on clamouring for positions more and more exalted—beginning, let us say, with that of Dictator of the Stage throughout the world—that is a question which can hardly be answered save by putting it to the proof. And, as some people will think, fortunately, we are not likely to have the opportunity of seeing how in such circumstances you would behave.

I do not know what ingenious person it was who, at a time when you were younger—though, I fear, hardly wiser—than you now are, compared you to "the sea-green Incorruptible." But I may tell you, between ourselves, that as I value Monsieur Robespierre's honesty just precisely as much as I value his unselfishness, which I take to be about on a par with Couthon's humanity, why, I cannot compliment you upon the comparison. On the contrary, it seems to me distinctly unfair. Robespierre cared for nobody in the world but himself, and fought as far as his courage took him for his own hand, while you are continually taking up the cause of some other person, notably Ibsen, and pushing it with a cold, dull, remorseless boredom until you tempt us to wish, if not that you had never been born, at least that you had been born and stayed in those Norsk regions which your literary and dramatic idol inhabits. This would have saved you trouble, too, for then you would not have had to translate his

doubtless immortal works. As to your translations and their superiority or inferiority to those by other hands, it is not for me to judge. The notorious fact, however, that experts in my slightly out-of-the-way trade spend all their spare time in running about the city extolling each other's wares has been uncommonly well illustrated in the case of yourself and one of your rivals. If it came to a pitch beyond words, I should be inclined to back you; but a wordy war, look you, is of no interest to anybody in the writing trade. I doubt if it even amuses the combatants.

I am aware that it is quite useless to attack your infatuation for the Ibsen with whom you are besotted, and yet I would fain ask you what can your ideal of the drama be when you put on the highest pinnacle a dramatist who, apart from the non-construction of his alleged plays, deliberately selects his subjects from the most sordid, abject, even the most revolting corners of human life, relieving the crushing effect of their hideous monotony only by a mechanical joyless mirth like the crackling of thorns? Ibsen has not the excuse I have heard, most inadequately, made for Zola by one who said of him, "C'est un triste. If he had before him a beautiful landscape and a manure heap he would examine the manure heap with a microscope." No, Ibsen has shown in his unactable play *Brand*, and elsewhere, that he is capable of writing magnificently, if in a fashion completely sombre. He has, however, chosen, for the most part, to confine himself so that one might compare the works of his best known on the stage to a narrow, pitch-black stream flowing between high, forbidding rocks, which almost exclude any gleam from the sun, but are provided with ledges on which lunatics may skip, and grin, and gambol. It is this narrowness, this gambolling, that your appreciation admires, and, indeed, it is perhaps a saving point in you that you should admire anything, for from such of your work as does not relate to Ibsen, one would certainly imagine that nought to admire was your only ware. I am not informed that anyone in his senses has ever described you as a *fine* critic, but you have been most unwisely praised for a quality which is common to every one of your brethren in reputable positions. This praise has, in a fashion, taken possession of you. You have at last got to believe that you are, if not the only honest critic in London, at least far more than common honest. You are anxious to keep up this preposterous reputation, which you have imagined for yourself, and you have followed a very simple path in attempting so to do. You have, that is, substituted for criticism on the one hand a ceaseless, dry, unintelligent carping, as burdensome as the grasshopper to the aged, at

attempts to exalt the drama; on the other a dull drone—I cannot call it a pæan—of praise for Ibsen and the most evil-smelling of his works.

As to your opinions on the technical art of play-writing and acting, those we may begin to discuss when you have learnt your A B C in the matter. For my part I think the discussion is a very long way off.

L. Anon.

To George Bernard Shaw, Esq.

SIR,—You, as a dramatic critic, have, permit me to remark, certain qualities in common with the hero of your extremely clever story, *Cashel Byron's Profession*. But, unluckily, you lack a certain quality which you depicted with much vividness in him. A certain very distinguished actor once said of himself that he lacked one little thing—genius. Well, you lack that, as, indeed, most of us do; but that is not a thing by any means necessary to the equipment of a really good dramatic critic. You lack another little thing which is fully necessary to that equipment, and that little thing is science. Authors not infrequently forget their own works, but you may remember a passage occurring early in your capital if somewhat brutal story, when Cashel Byron, with one light touch of his fingers, in order to illustrate the supreme importance of balance, angers a too confident and too patronizing amateur by sending him flying backwards into an armchair. This is an illustration of what a critic should be able to do, and of what you cannot or will not do. A critic should do his spiriting gently. There are occasions, of course, which call for the blow of a Milo, but they are happily few and far between. No Examiner of Plays in our time has been an absolute fool, nor is the office in itself so foolish and superabundant as certain people—I think you are among them—would have us believe. It is indeed the existence of that office, and the fact that it is usually filled by persons of discretion, which deprives you of the right—ah! how unjustly and unfortunately—of striking such blows except on the rarest occasions. But this is of small moment to you; you usurp a right when there is none; you take a sledgehammer where a Damascus sabre might not be entirely out of place, and you seem to wield it furiously for the mere pleasure and amusement which it causes you—it causes no amusement to anybody else, and why should you not amuse yourself?—to give swinging blows at anything which you dislike, or think you dislike—blows which, as a matter of fact, waste all their swashing on the desert air. No one with any wits would

deny you the gift of cleverness, nor would any such person conceive that you had used your cleverness in a direction pointed out by good sense. Your one idea of criticism is parallel to the notion figured of the Irishman at Donnybrook Fair, who cried "Here's a bald pate," and straightway whacked at it with his shillelagh. This is, I think, an image to be found in the writings of Mr. Thackeray, from whose method you might with very great advantage take a lesson; but I am very sure that you will not do so. And you differ from the Irishman in this respect, that you are wanting in discrimination between a bald and a well-thatched pate. Now, this is unworthy of your talents. You are perfectly within your rights if you choose to say "*I* dislike this, it seems to *me* that is puerile or bombastic, or *undramatic*," however much your personal opinions may differ from those of people who have had more advantages and more experience in criticism than it has been permitted to you to enjoy. You step outside the pale of criticism when you put forward your private fancies as if they were the expressed thoughts of a man distinguished above his brethren in criticism by insight, intellect, and broadness of view. This is what you appear to think; and, if appearances are not deceptive, you have the advantage of possessing what many people envy, an absolutely unique position. An audience of one man, if that one man be one's self, may be extremely pleasant and appreciative, and it is greatly to be hoped for your sake that this is how things work themselves out. For, sure, the approbation of one infallible judge is greatly to be preferred to the unreflecting plaudits of a less instructed multitude.

Besides the science which distinguished *Cashel Byron*, there is another matter in which you are unfortunately deficient, and it is a matter of some importance. Its absence was marked enough in a play of yours, but it is not my business to deal with your original work, save as I have ventured to do with *Cashel Byron* for the purpose of illustration. The matter to which I refer is humour, and of your plentiful lack of this, as a writer, one striking instance may suffice for all. When Henry Irving produced Mr. Conan Doyle's exquisite piece of picturesque characterization, *A Story of Waterloo*, the manner in which it was treated by the protagonist did not commend itself to your judgment. Some may have thought that this was your misfortune and not your fault, for you certainly missed a keen pleasure, which was felt by a great many people who are by no means unswerving admirers of Sir Henry Irving, a pleasure which was expected by those who did, without blind adoration, already admire him greatly, and a pleasure which had the charm of unexpectedness for those who, not liking him in

many parts, found him faultless in his presentation of the old corporal with his oddities, his fervour breaking the bonds of age, and his striking death-scene. Well, you did not happen to like it, and (this brings me back to what I have said before in other words) you were not content with expressing your personal dislike. You must needs be witty, sarcastic, scathing. You thought it funny. And what a mad wag you must have felt yourself to be as you penned the words. You found it facetious to say, to head the article, "Mr. Irving takes Paregoric." Allow me to point out to you that this amazingly blunt attempt at fun was not original with you. A paper, not the one in which your article appeared, had for years adopted the trick, a very meaningless and silly one, of substituting the name of an actor for that of the personage represented by him. Perhaps, sly dog that you are, you meant subtly to suggest that Henry Irving could not impersonate the old Corporal at all, but remained, plain for all folk to see, Henry Irving, made up and unashamed because nobody but you (but then, as they say in the west country, you'm so cliver) detected the fact that the more he tried to look and speak like the Corporal the more he spoke and looked like Henry Irving. If this is so, why, then, again, you had the proud distinction of standing on a pinnacle all and entirely of your own. But, to tell you the truth, I do not suspect you of wasting all this good subtlety. I think you really fancied that you had made a joke. And a very odd fancy it was. I beg you to observe that I selected this instance not because I happened to be one of those who thought well of the performance, but because it would be difficult to find a more apt illustration of your methods in what you doubtless call criticism. And if you do call it criticism, why, to adapt a Shaksperean phrase, there be people who are wise to speak well of themselves, for very obvious reasons.

L. Anon.

A SUBSIDISED THEATRE.

By Sir Edward Russell.

An ideal that may be worked towards—that will do good in being worked towards, even if never realised; but that need not be despaired of: that is my notion of the proposal that the State or any municipality should subsidise a theatre for the fitting performance of plays of a high rank of excellence. Mr. Nisbet objects to my lending countenance to this ideal, because I made what he calls "the curious qualification" that it would be realised if the affairs of the nation were managed with full intelligence.

He infers that I do not believe in the practicability of the idea, and pronounces it, therefore, a pity that I should have the appearance of lending countenance to it. Now, in this matter I "know not seems." I advocate a subsidised theatre because I believe in it. And though the management of the affairs of the nation with full intelligence is not the likeliest thing in the world to come to pass, one never knows what approaches to fully intelligent government may be made. At the accession of the Queen the establishment of the Science and Art Department and compulsory education seemed as unlikely as the establishment of a State theatre seems now; and neither of these innovations can be said to have come of popular demand. The first was probably the work of the Prince Consort. The second was pressed forward by idealists and enthusiasts, and had the good fortune to enlist the dogged zeal of Mr. Forster, who came into office ready to carry it at a time when the leaders of one of the great parties in the State were eagerly bent on enacting great measures. But why not encourage any ideal? Theatre management will be all the more creditable if the public mind, and the minds of managers, are made familiar with ideals. And, moreover, no man can ever know that any particular ideal will not prosper. In the city in which I live Mr. Gray Hill, a lifelong dramatic enthusiast, brought up, like myself, in the Sadler's Wells pit in the days of Phelps, conceived last winter the idea that a series of subscription performances might be given in the spring at one of our theatres by Mr. Benson, whose laudable struggle for the higher national drama he was anxious to promote. By most people, and certainly by me, though I rendered what help I could, this project was regarded as Utopian. But a committee was formed, the idea found favour, and a whole month of successful Shaksperian performances to always well-filled and frequently crowded houses was the result. That ideal was realised. But it may be said that this shows that my subsidised theatre ideal is unnecessary. That would be a very rash conclusion. The object of a State or municipal subsidy would be to make sure of a theatre managed on high principles—to avoid the existence and solvency of such a theatre being left to bursts of public feeling or to the spasmodic zeal of specially cultivated people—to make sure of it as a permanent part of State social machinery supported at the public expense. This, I said and say, would be done if the affairs of the nation could be directed with full intelligence. Progress in other matters has, especially in this century, been so unexpected and so unexpectedly rapid that it would be rash to foretell that there will never be sufficient

intelligence in the community to establish a subsidised national theatre, or even to multiply subsidised theatres among the great municipalities.

While confessing that such progress appears unlikely, I am not additionally discouraged by Mr. Nisbet's acute arguments. They are not so fatal as they look, first, because he over-labours the argument from want of sympathy with the Democracy, and, secondly, because his practical difficulties would disappear if there were really an effectual desire in powerful quarters for my desideratum. Mr. Nisbet describes this as an age in which the disendowment of the Church of England is called for, and concludes that the endowment of the Stage is for that reason especially unlikely. "Age" is a large word, but in the present time I perceive no earnest or prevalent call for the disendowment of the Church; nor is any such call likely to become effectual, or even general, for many years to come. On the other hand, it is obviously more and more the practice for objects which are regarded as of public importance to be aided by public grants. Such subventions from the Imperial Exchequer are now made to colleges, to corporations, and other bodies, for technical education, and to agriculturists because of the depressed condition of their calling. Projected legislation is in the same vein. Judging by the occurrences and tendencies of the last few years, it is feasible to prophesy that for some time to come we shall find that while realised property is heavily taxed, interests, trades, classes, and public objects will be very freely subsidised from State resources. I am not suggesting that the theatre is likely to be an early recipient of State bounty, but one cannot tell what may happen, and such an event would depend far more upon the wish of some prominent statesman or statesmen than upon any previously formed opinion of the Democracy. If the Chancellor of the Exchequer were somebody else than Sir Michael Hicks Beach, a determination of Mr. Balfour that this thing should be done would almost suffice; and with Mr. Chamberlain's concurrence there would be no doubt of its being done if only the Chancellor of the Exchequer could be won over. There is a legend that when Mr. Chamberlain was beginning to be a great man in Birmingham, and was at the same time deeply interested in theatricals, someone said to him, "You will be a Minister of the Crown," and he replied, "What's the good of talking like that? You know I would rather see the drama restored to its right condition, and have something to do with restoring it, than be the Queen's Prime Minister." There are things much more unlikely than that Mr. Chamberlain should

establish a subsidised State Theatre. My aim is not, however, to tack this or that great name to the fortunes of this proposal, but to suggest, as one not unaccustomed to watch the real workings of affairs, how easily it might take hold and get pressed into acceptance.

Mr. Nisbet assumes that the working of our system, as representative, is logical and exact, which it is not. He then assumes that the Democracy, as a systematically and logically working power, which it is not, will exercise its volition in a particular direction, whereas it is wholly unsafe to prophesy that on any given subject the Democracy—whose big, big D is by no means either so damnatory or decisive in practice as it is in theory—will even have any opinion at all, much more that it will insist on giving political effect to its opinion. It is easy to say what the Democracy will do if you first take for granted that it will logically exercise its dynamic constitutional force, and secondly take for granted that it will use that force for or against particular proposals; but when you have done this you have only placed yourself on a par with the constitutional reasoner who proved to a man, without convincing him, that he could not possibly be in the stocks. He was in the stocks; and before we are many years older the Democracy will be in many positions which, to an *à priori* reasoner such as Mr. Nisbet, seem quite impossible. All through my able critic's remarks there is perceptible an exact faith in the systematic working of public bodies and authorities which, were it well founded, would be a valid argument against the entertainment of ideals. For instance, he jumps to the conclusion that a subsidised theatre would have to give certain performances, because the masses like Gus Elen and the Teetotum troupe. This is not how things work. The very people who like music-hall turns are quite reasonably aware that it would be what they would call "cheek" to expect that Gus Elen should be supplied to them at the State expense. Many of them are quite sufficiently intelligent, and most of them might soon be made so, to understand that Sir Henry Irving, for whom they have an immense respect, or any other manager of great authority and classical taste, might very fairly be enabled by the State to produce continuously great dramatic works, without ever having to resort to inferior enterprises in order to bring the balance out on the right side. To think of managing a State or municipal theatre by a committee would be as absurd as for a body of proprietors to manage a newspaper; but it would be a satire on the intelligence of Britons if the State could not make a perfectly operative and satisfactory contract with Sir Henry

Irving to manage the Lyceum as it is usually managed. Whether that is necessary or not may depend on wayward public taste, and on the lives and fortunes of two or three men, such as Irving, Tree, and Alexander; but at all events, if the right people were willing, it would be easily possible to make the continual furnishing of good plays, and good acting, in at least one theatre, independent of temporary declensions of popular taste, and of the difficulties by which high-minded managers are apt to be beset.

BECKET AT CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL.

By H. Hamilton Fyfe.

WE wonder whether any one else in the throng of attentive hearers who filled the Chapter House at Canterbury, when Sir Henry Irving read *Becket* on the last day of May, recalled a passage in Mr. Toole's *Reminiscences*, which tells of another reading given by the same actor in very different circumstances. The sight of this beautiful building, opened with great pomp by the Prince and Princess of Wales on the Saturday, first publicly used on the Monday for the purpose of hearing a play read by a player, crowded with an audience that included many distinguished men and women and all the best elements of Kent "county" society, the introduction of the reader by the Dean, the moving of a vote of thanks by the Mayor, were, like the pansies enjoying the sunshine in the Cathedral flower borders outside, "for thoughts." Many memories came flying back to the mind, many old half-forgotten reminiscences of other days; scenes in the history of the Cathedral, aspects of the life and position of players, attitudes of society at large, vicissitudes in the career of the central figure of the day—all trod upon one another's heels, and all went to compose the impression which one brought away. Among our memories was Mr. Toole's story which tells of Sir Henry Irving's first attempt to turn an honest penny as a public reader at a little town near Edinburgh. "It was during an engagement he was filling at the Theatre Royal. There was a holiday, or a 'night off.' He and a friend determined to utilise the time, and hired the Town Hall of the little borough in question. When the night arrived they started off in high spirits; they saw their bills here and there announcing their attractive entertainment, but were a little taken aback when they reached the hall to find it was not open. Presently, when the keeper came and lighted the gas, and Mr. Irving's friend took his place in the money-taker's box, the reader strolled carelessly on the other

side of the street to watch the audience rush in. He strolled some time, the hour struck for the entertainment to commence, but not a soul arrived. One person, I think, put in an appearance and received his money back, and the enterprising impresario and his star returned to Edinburgh saying very little by the way, rarely afterwards mentioning the bitterness of the disappointment."

A day like May 31st must make up for many disappointments in the past. From every point of view it was a notable occasion. The very fact of Sir Henry Irving coming before the public in a new line made it interesting alone; but this aspect of the event was naturally overshadowed by the chance which gave him so striking an opportunity of showing that the Stage is no longer regarded by the Church as anathema, and at the same time of benefiting the Cathedral Restoration Fund at the invitation of the Dean. Surely such an occurrence as this must claim a place in the by-records of our national and social life. The position of the Church with regard to the actor has never, it is true, been so irreconcilable in England as it once was, for instance, in France. We have no incident in our Stage history to be placed as a parallel to the refusal of Christian burial to Molière, whose fame has already far out-lived that of the "churlish priest" who caused his interment with "maimèd rites." But the task of reconciling the clergy to the theatre, begun and effected to some extent by Macready and Charles Kean, has been carried very much further than ever before in our own times. The man who more than anyone else deserves the credit for this is, of course, Sir Henry Irving, to whose artistic endeavours and praiseworthy ambition Dean Farrar paid so warm a tribute in his little speech. Sir Henry has deservedly been the recipient of many honours. He has received recognition from the Sovereign and the State; he has enjoyed the hospitality of the Universities; he has lectured on the actor's art and calling at Oxford, at the Royal Institution, and in other places where no actor had stood before him. This reading of Lord Tennyson's "dramatic poem" (of which, as *The Theatre* pointed out last month, Sir Henry Irving was practically part-author, so far as the stage version is concerned) in the Chapter House of Canterbury Cathedral—not fifty yards from the spot where the militant Archbishop met his death at the hands of Henry's knights—adds yet another to the laurels he has gathered, and one which to a good many people will seem even more notable than any of the rest. Emerson, in one of his essays on English traits (though the observation is not, indeed, peculiar to Emerson) remarked that, while as a nation we find it

hard to overcome prejudices and to take new friends into favour, we excel in staunchness and faithfulness to all who are so accepted. The thought in some form or another must have occurred to many who sat and listened to the rise and fall of that musical voice on the May afternoon. Even on the day, four years ago, when Sir Henry stood under the shadow of Canterbury Cathedral and unveiled the memorial of Christopher Marlowe ("slain the 1st of June, 1593")—even then it would have seemed strange to be told that in so short a time he would be occupying the position which he occupied on this day, memorable as it must be in the story of the English stage.

The weather was fortunately perfect, and the special arrangements made by the railway companies aided the blue sky and the sunshine in tempting many people out of London to the delightful old city, whose quaint streets were still gay with the decorations that had welcomed the Royal party two days before. The cool quiet of the Chapter House was pleasant after the summer heat of the afternoon, and a few minutes' contemplation of its noble proportions attuned the mind to follow closely and intelligently the drama that centres round one of the greatest names associated with Canterbury in the history of England. The reader's desk stood at the centre of one side—a plain deal platform and a plain oak desk. Close by it a harmonium was screened from view by a profusion of evergreens, and this, with a small vesper bell that rang at intervals during the last act, formed the only accessories upon which the reader relied for any effect beyond that he could himself create. There was, however, one effect which apparently had not been foreseen, and which added greatly to the impressiveness of the scenes that pass in and about the Cathedral. The bell for the afternoon office rang out into the warm, still air, just as it must have rung out five hundred years ago, when the bluff Henry ruled over our fair land, and when it ceased, and the far-away tones of the stately organ, with the muted voices of the choristers, could be heard, a thrill passed through the Chapter House, and no one possessed of any imagination can have failed to feel the drama become more real and the interest of those last acts more enthralling for this unexpected accompaniment.

Sir Henry began with a rough enumeration of the characters to be introduced, and a word to mention that not the whole work but extracts would be given. This was a judicious arrangement, which enabled both the play and the reader to be heard to the best advantage. No doubt many of his hearers had Sir Henry Irving's very remarkable impersonation of Thomas Becket fresh

in their minds; and to them his fine rendering of the drama appealed with greater force. But the stirring events with which Lord Tennyson dealt must have been perfectly comprehensible to those who had not seen the piece acted on the stage or even read it. The changes of personality were indicated with wonderful subtlety and wonderful clearness, less by alterations of voice than by gestures and movements, by clever suggestions of character and always by thoroughly artistic means. It was of course in the lines of the statesman-prelate that the reader appeared to the greatest advantage. His portrayal of the great ecclesiastic is moving and intensely interesting in all its details, and in the death scene he was particularly fine. With the King, too, Sir Henry was remarkably successful, and neither the famous game of chess nor the episode of the signing of the "customs" ever went better on the stage of the Lyceum than they did at Canterbury by the unaided effort of a single performer. The women characters were interpreted with rare skill, the pretty waywardness of Fair Rosamund, the fierce vindictive nature of Queen Eleanor and the rustic simplicity of the maid in Rosamund's Bower, all being brought vividly before the audience, while even the subordinate figures in the play had each some touch of character to distinguish him from his fellows. The whole drama, as scene succeeded scene (the details as to the situation of each being carefully indicated by the reader, who spared no pains to make the action understood by every one of his hearers), carried all who listened along with it, deeply interested, if one can judge by appearances, and thoroughly appreciative, as they showed by their frequent applause at convenient intervals. So much pleasure did the reading give, that it may be hoped Sir Henry Irving's gifts may be shown in this fashion on other occasions and to wider audiences. Macready used to give readings with great success in his old age, when he had retired from the stage. It will be long before Sir Henry Irving's retirement need be thought of, but in the meantime, since he has now revealed his great talents in what must be to most people a fresh light, it would be a pity to hide them up again when they are certain to be warmly appreciated.

PRESS NOTICES—THEIR USE AND THEIR ABUSE.

By Malcolm Watson.

IT has always been a debateable question as to how far precisely the success or failure of a new play is attributable to the praise or censure awarded it by professional critics. Facts, like statistics, if handled with sufficient ingenuity, can be made to support almost

any theory, and it would be as easy to show that wholesale condemnation by the Press, as in the famous case of *The Private Secretary*, is no less certain to stimulate a piece into popularity than unrestricted commendation is likely to hurry it to a dishonoured doom. The subject, however, is beset with so many side issues that it is practically impossible to lay down any hard-and-fast rule regarding it. A play may be intrinsically bad, and on that account be pronounced by experts wholly unworthy, yet may contain a single feature or character novel or attractive enough to ensure for it prolonged favour. On the other hand, another piece in which good workmanship and clever writing are combined may for no better reason than that created by public caprice fail to prove pecuniarily successful. In neither instance do Press notices appear to exercise the slightest influence upon the result. Yet the anxiety with which these are awaited, the eagerness with which they are scanned by the managerial eye, would tend to show that they are regarded by one class at least with curiosity and even apprehension. Nor, if I may trust certain reports as to carefully-kept scrap-books, would it seem that actors and authors are entirely indifferent to the opinions of those whose duty—and privilege—it is to sit in judgment upon their work. Otherwise, how, indeed, would it be possible for the many Press-cutting agencies to flourish as they indubitably do at present?

It may be taken, therefore, as fairly well established that the views held and expressed by dramatic critics possess, or are believed to possess, a certain degree of weight. If further proof of the circumstance were required it might be found in the advertising columns of the daily papers a day or two after the production of a new play. Our leading managers, it is true, seldom indulge in the luxury of giving publicity, at their own expense, to "extracts from the Press." Sir Henry Irving does not consider it necessary to bring to the knowledge of the public what the *Islington News* or the *Hampstead Courier* thinks of his impersonation of Napoleon. Nor is Mr. Charles Wyndham eager to acquaint the world with the opinions of these enterprising papers concerning his performance as Dr. Lewin Carey. But of this particular quality of reticence others are less sparing, and it is not unusual to find an entire column in one or more of the principal dailies devoted to a selection of the encomiums passed upon a new piece. Nothing, in truth, can to the dispassionate observer be more striking than the absolute unanimity revealed by such anthologies. He will, indeed, search the column from top to bottom without discovering a single adverse expression.

To judge by the "Press extracts," the play must be a perfect masterpiece—the acting super-excellent. Adjective is heaped on adjective, phrase upon phrase, metaphor upon metaphor, all pointing to the same conclusion, that the entire performance is and deserves to be a huge success. Still, here and there, the experienced reader may detect a curious hiatus, more eloquent than words—a resort to the use of asterisks only too full of meaning. And possibly he will be tempted, with a tell-tale shake of the head, to ask himself whether after all things left to be imagined are not in point of fact even more potent than things actually seen.

I presume it would be unfair to charge managers who thus present garbled, or, if they prefer the word, selected extracts from Press notices with downright dishonesty. But I cannot refrain from declaring that, consciously or unconsciously, they are guilty of an attempt to persuade the public into believing the thing that is not. The *suppressio veri* in such cases is no less reprehensible than the *suggestio falsi*. It may be argued that a man is not called upon to decry his own wares, but there is an equally stringent principle which demands that he shall not mislead a possible purchaser as to their quality. If you sell me a horse with the warranty that it is in perfect condition, you are certainly not relieved from responsibility by the subsequent statement that you meant "only if it were not ridden." So is it with plays. Again and again a critic may yield to his desire to praise, while careful at the same time to do so with certain reservations. Unfortunately these reservations are too frequently carefully suppressed, the praise alone being chosen for public presentment. This I hold to be distinctly unfair to the writer of the notice as well as to playgoers, who may be led by these means into paying their money to witness a performance of a very different kind from that which they have the right to expect. The evil, I am sorry to say, does not end here, however. To such an extent is the practice carried at times as to result in an absolute falsifying of the critic's intention. Suppose, for example, that one of these gentlemen has written in the following strain. "Nothing short of a miracle could ever make of the play produced last night at the Excelsior Theatre a real success." What, think you, would be his feelings on discovering a day or two later that the only words quoted from his notice were the three last, "A real success"? And yet this is no purely fanciful case; the thing happens every day in hardly less glaring form. Indeed, the foregoing may be fairly considered as quite an ordinary instance.

I am not quite sure whether the members of an audience

would not in the circumstances be justified in demanding the return of their money. But the wrong inflicted upon the critics themselves is clearly even greater. These unfortunate gentlemen find themselves in the disagreeable position of seeing their words put to a use they never contemplated; of being forced unwittingly to testify to the merits of a production possessing so few commendable features that not even wild omnibus-horses would drag them to witness it again. The obvious retort is, of course, that critics should never write what they do not mean; that they have only themselves to blame if their notices are couched in such a form as to leave them open to distortion. Yet, be a man as cunningly discreet as he may, he will never rise superior to the dexterity of the advertisement-faker. As a rule, theatrical criticisms are written in hot haste, and there is no time, consequently, to calculate the far-reaching significance of every word, or the possible manner in which it may be twisted to serve a special purpose. One can only trust that the public has ceased to place any reliance on the "Press extracts" which appear in the advertising columns, and that now and then they may be provoked into comparing them with the originals as they stand in relation to their context. This hope is to some extent negatived by the fact that certain managers continue to spend hundreds of pounds in pursuit of the practice referred to. That they should persevere in this measure unless confident that an adequate return for their outlay will be forthcoming I find it difficult to believe. It is not their custom to cast bread upon the waters without some grounds for the expectation that they will find it, and something over, after many days. Apparently, therefore, they regard the exercise as in the nature of a profitable one. With the ethical aspect of the question they probably do not concern themselves. But it is one which appeals forcibly alike to the public and the critics. If the opinions of these latter are to be quoted, they should be given in their entirety or not at all. When a man declares that a musket is a splendid one, save that stock, lock, and barrel call for immediate renewal, he can scarcely be considered to have passed an unreservedly favourable opinion upon the article.

THE STAGE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

By Edward Sass and James Nelson.

FROM the point of view of the English playgoer, who sits at home at ease, Africa is, theatrically speaking, as much a Dark Continent as it is in most other respects. It is true that in the last year or two much more public attention has been drawn to

the "uninhabitable parts of the world," as the old geographers had it; and the accounts of the Jameson raid, coupled with an awakened interest, friendly or otherwise, in the doings of "Oom Paul," have caused people to buy up-to-date maps, wherein they have discovered, to their astonishment, that Africa has been fairly opened up on both sides of the Equator. "Is Johannesburg the capital of Pretoria?" said a London lady to one of the present scribes. "Do you ever play to white people?" inquired another. And if many dramatic enterprises have gone out to woo Fortune, not always to win her, the history of things dramatic in Africa, excepting in the form of an occasional note or two in the theatrical newspapers, remains unwritten, albeit it is a somewhat remarkable one.

The archives of the native races do not, unfortunately, enlighten us as to whether any dramatic performances were given before the arrival of the Dutch settlers in the seventeenth century, and probably for the simple reason—to paraphrase "The Walrus and the Carpenter"—that "there were no archives at all." Be this as it may, you will not find in the world a better mimic than your Zulu, nor one more endowed with what is opprobriously termed the "theatrical" instinct. His strut, his unquenchable humour, and his extraordinary power of imitation make him one of the most amusing fellows possible; while at any time a number of them will give you a set dance which for precision and general ensemble would not disgrace an Empire ballet. No one ever saw them rehearse these dances, and yet the writers have witnessed 1000 of them at one time going through complex evolutions with the regularity of clockwork, without word of command, and with an effect that is awesome to a degree. The "music" is provided by drums and a kind of xylophone, which, with twangings and pipings from other indescribable instruments, and a weird chant in the minor from every black throat, lends a "creepy" accompaniment to the heavy and measured thud, thud, of the Zulus' feet.

The Dutch undoubtedly imported the drama in some form into Cape Colony; for although the modern Boer is made of very stern stuff, and is almost invariably destitute of ear or taste for music, or any such ungodliness, there is to this day a very old Opera House in the centre of Van Riebeck-square, Cape Town, in the Dutch style of architecture of, at the latest, the middle of the last century. The players of this period had strange neighbours; for Van Riebeck-square was the slave market, and continued so until the "verdomde Engelshman" came, and by his suppression of the unholy traffic, all too well beloved of the

Boers, began the "trekking" and the racial hatreds and quarrels which are with us to this hour.

It would be quite unprofitable, and entirely beside the object of this article, to dive into the history of the Dutch Theatre in Cape Colony. The task must be left to some enthusiastic Africander student, who may—or may not—be able to find materials for such a chronicle among the dusty records of the municipal offices at Cape Town. But we must ask the reader to make a great jump with us, and passing the time—in the '60's—when G. V. Brooke paid a flying visit to the South African capital on his way out to Australia, come to the practical pioneer in the dramatic world there, Capt. Disney Roebuck. To him, and of course to others in a lesser degree, belongs the credit of establishing a proper season, with recognised English artists—many of them in prominent positions to-day—to play all the comedies, &c., in vogue in the '70's. From Capt. Roebuck's day forward there has been a constant stream of theatrical companies in Africa, good, bad, and indifferent. The first great impetus was undoubtedly given to things dramatic by the rise of Kimberley, in the Griqualand West Diamond Fields. Here for a long time good theatrical business reflected the extraordinary prosperity of the Fields. In this connection may be mentioned that the late Mr. Barney Barnato was one of the staunchest supporters of the theatre in Kimberley, and loved nothing so well as playing himself, showing undeniable power in rough parts. It is a matter of doubt whether London playgoers remember that Mr. Barnato once took the Vaudeville Theatre, some fourteen years ago, and played Desmarets in *Plot and Passion* at a matinée. It is a curious coincidence that both the writers of this article were in the cast. At Kimberley, Mr. Barnato was several times seen as Mathias in *The Bells*, his fondness for which rôle was made the cause of much good-natured "chaff" on the part of his friends. Long after he had become possessed of the enormous wealth which has made his name famous the world over, he would always find time to talk of dramatic matters, and has frequently button-holed us to tell us of some new idea he had for a play—"Understand?" Poor fellow, he has strutted his hour upon the stage of life, and we can never forget his bustling in day after day to the Rand Club, Johannesburg, during the trial of the Reformers, full of the latest news from Pretoria, and of what Paul Kruger said to him and what "Barnato" (his favourite form of expression) said to Paul Kruger. Socially, as we knew him, he was a real good fellow, and his little, good-tempered face, his pince-nez and his perpetual nasal "Understand?" will

be long remembered in Africa. The Press is so full of anecdotes of Barnato that we may perhaps be forgiven for introducing the following story. One night in Cape Town, during a performance of *Liberty Hall*, Barney and a friend entered the stalls somewhat late. Barnato was wearing a light covert coat over his evening clothes, and being somewhat preoccupied with his mines and millions, did not notice that in taking off his outer garment he had also removed his evening coat. He was for some moments quite ignorant of the fact that, surrounded by elegantly-attired ladies and military officers in full mess "kit," he sat in his shirt sleeves; and his expression of astonishment on realising the situation, as he looked from one linen-covered arm to the other and hurriedly resumed his black "claw-hammer," will not be forgotten by those who witnessed the incident.

To return to Kimberley. Its days, theatrically speaking, were numbered from the moment that the great amalgamation of the interests of Messrs. Rhodes, Beit, and Barnato took place, with its consequent enormous depletion of the population; and it would have gone hard with the players' calling if, at the moment that the sun of prosperity set in Kimberley, it had not risen in greater glory on the distant veld of the Transvaal. Johannesburg, the City of Gold, could not wait long without its theatre, and so the actors, like the rest of the adventurers, "trekked" beyond the Vaal. The subsequent history of the drama in Africa, and its extraordinary development, are almost entirely identified with the rise of Johannesburg. Theatres, of course of the most temporary character, designed in the stern utilitarian order of architecture, and constructed of that highly ornamental building material, corrugated iron, soon arose. Companies poured in. Miss Emma Chambers—once a favourite London soubrette—and her husband, Mr. Albert Marsh, whose name merits mention further on, came all the way from Australia; Messrs. Searelle, Bonamici, Edgar Perkins, &c., "ran" opera, bnrlesque, drama, and variety entertainments. The first-named took Mr. Lionel Brough with a company to Johannesburg; and Mr. Brough may be regarded as the pioneer "star" in the Golden City. The difficulties besetting a journey from Cape Town to the Rand were then no joke, for the distance, 1100 miles, had at that time, for the most part, to be done by coach—not the spanking, jingling, four-in-hand beauty that runs you to Brighton and back, but a huge, cumbersome, groaning abomination with a lengthy "span"—*i.e.*, team; a swaying, toppling concern that played shuttlecock with its passengers; that rushed full speed down the banks of rivers, tumbled through the stream and crashed up the

other side; that jolted, creaked, and rolled over the rough roads of the Veld, and finally landed its passengers, miserable, bruised, and more dead than alive, at their dusty destination. No wonder so many people stayed in Johannesburg; they were afraid to return—at least by coach. Mr. Brough at once established himself as a popular idol, and his name is as much a household word in Africa as it is in England—and that is saying a good deal. We believe that it was Mrs. Brown Potter and Mr. Kyrle Bellew's intention to visit the Rand, but the burning of the theatre in Cape Town upset all their calculations. But Miss Geneviève Ward and Mr. W. H. Vernon went through the country—much, if history lieth not, to their profit.

Now, among these numerous importations there arrived one day a modest trio of clever people, with a pretty little entertainment that had stood the test of being played in Australia, India, and other places on and off the theatrical map; and little did anyone think that these folk were destined to revolutionise things theatrical in Africa. They were Mr. and Mrs. B. F. Wheeler and Mr. Frank Wheeler, the name of the last being now as familiar in London as it is in Johannesburg. This extremely wide-awake firm soon recognised the fact that the population on the Rand was not only increasing to an enormous extent, but that the large importation of English capital was bringing with it men of fortune and culture, whose appetites would not be satisfied with the rough-and-ready fare necessarily hitherto provided—mainly owing to the difficulties of transport and the scarcity of material. On the completion of the railway to Johannesburg in 1892, therefore, Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler, armed with an introduction to Mr. W. Lestocq, came to England, and through him arranged with Mr. Charles Hawtrey to send over the first complete London company, fully equipped with a large wardrobe, and a properly-rehearsed repertory of the plays belonging to him and associated with his name. The risk of an undertaking on this scale was, at the time, considerable; but the success of this organisation was so pronounced that higher flights seemed to the Messrs. Wheeler possible; so, in 1893, negotiations were opened, through Mr. Michael Levenston, with Mr. George Edwardes; and the latter, always eager for new worlds to conquer, sent out a company, nearly forty strong, with all the scenery, dresses, and properties for the production of no fewer than eight of the most popular musical comedies. So the Johannesburgers saw *The Gaiety Girl*, with her numerous sisters and brothers, in replica of the London production. The magnitude of this transaction will be better understood when

it is explained that the white population of the city named was at that time considerably under 50,000. It was a serious venture, indeed; but it proved to be thoroughly justified, and since then the Messrs. Wheeler and Mr. Edwardes have made four more equally successful experiments; and it may be here mentioned that, outside the large number of theatrical artistes who have visited the country since 1893, South Africa has welcomed the late Sir Charles and Lady Hallé, Messrs. Sims Reeves, Mark Twain, G. H. Snazelle, John Radcliff, and Charles Manners, with Mesdames Margaret Macintyre, Nellie Ganthony, Camilla Urso, Trebelli, Fanny Moody, Amy Sherwin, Fanny Wentworth, and many minor lights of the concert and operatic stages.

The foregoing, as must be at once seen, is the merest outline of the history of the theatre in Africa; not intended to be anything but a sketch, without reference to memoranda or data of any kind. We have preferred to devote the remainder of the space at our disposal to the impressions made upon us by the Rand people from a professional point of view; and let it be said at once that in every respect, a stranger either before or behind the curtain in—say the Standard Theatre, Johannesburg—might easily imagine himself in any of the best west-end theatres during the run of a successful piece. This statement may possibly raise a smile among the incredulous, but anyone whose business or pleasure has taken him to the Golden City will bear us out in the statement. The visitor will see the stalls (constituting the entire floor of the house) filled with ladies and gentlemen, the former in the very latest Paris fashions (with perhaps, if anything, a superabundance of diamonds); the dress circle, also all in full dress, and a gallery of orderly folk at the somewhat "tall" price of half-a-crown.

The very best dramatic fare is the best for the managerial treasury. When it is said that *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, *The Case of Rebellious Susan*, *Sowing the Wind*, *The Masqueraders*, *Liberty Hall*, and plays of that calibre have established themselves as first favourites, surely no higher tribute can be paid to the good taste of the South African audiences. The presentation of plays of this description, for a week or a fortnight at most, before audiences of the class indicated—a great number of whom have seen the pieces in London during their constant visits to this country—makes management in Africa a most laborious and anxious business; for it renders it imperative that the Johannesburg productions should be, as nearly as possible, copies of those of London; and this entails the despatch of enormous quantities of scenery, properties, and wardrobe, all of which, of course, have

to be renewed for each season. It will thus be seen that a theatrical visit to Africa, under the new conditions, is a somewhat larger undertaking than may be imagined on this side.

In a country of adventure, it is hardly necessary to say, the theatrical pirate has flourished exceedingly, and the reputable manager frequently even now finds himself forestalled by illicit and sometimes ridiculous "perversions" of the plays he proposes to stage, and has paid for. Probably the most humorous piece of villainy of this kind was the "first production" of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* in Africa. This great literary work, though labelled "A. W. Pinero," was the outcome of one visit to the St. James' Theatre and an old MS. of *Peril*. One of the "parts," having fallen into our hands, revealed this masterly combination. The gentleman responsible for the concoction evidently went on the principle that "if you want a thing done well, do it yourself." Many other similar instances have occurred of audiences seeing what they did not want, after paying for what they did want. Poor Trilby, that most unfortunate of heroines, was collared, dressed up by half a dozen people, called the "Haymarket version," or what you will, and played *ad nauseam* before the legitimate version could get a hearing.

We cannot in this connection go further without rendering tribute to the splendid services rendered to our profession by Mr. Henry Hess, now Editor of the *African Critic*, who has not only proved himself the Tribune of the shareholder, but of the dramatic author, whose battle he has strenuously fought single-handed ever since the institution of his Transvaal organ, the *Critic*. Thanks to him, and to Mr. Albert Marsh, who first lugged the pirate into court, the efforts that we have personally made, with the invaluable legal assistance of Mr. Advocate Douglas Forster, of Johannesburg, have borne fruit, insomuch that Dr. Leyds, himself a staunch theatre-goer, has promised his protection, and, if necessary, his help in the Volksraad. Thus the snake, although not killed, is at least scotched.

Of necessity we have had to speak of Johannesburg; but we may add that Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Durban, Pietermaritzburg, and Pretoria have all well-appointed up-to-date theatres, and one is nearing completion in Kimberley. In conclusion, there can be no doubt that the ever-increasing influx of Englishmen and English capital, the pushing on of the Cape railways to Bulawayo and beyond, with the rapid development of Rhodesia, will ultimately place South Africa in the position of a formidable rival to America and Australia for theatrical enterprise. In 1887, Johannesburg was a camp; in 1897, it is a great and highly civi-

lised city; and there is no reason for doubting that other places, further afield, will have a similar history in the future.

THE FRENCH INVASION.

By Edward Morton.

IT is a deplorable coincidence that at the present moment, when the eyes of the nations are fixed upon London, the theatrical entertainment offered by the capital of the greatest empire of the world includes one play, and only one, by an English dramatist of repute. Mr. L. N. Parker, in whom the spirit of polite comedy seemed to have revived, is not represented on the stage; Mr. H. A. Jones is in the like case; and Mr. Sydney Grundy's name appears in the bills only as the "author" of a new "version" of an old comedy by Alexandre Dumas. At half-a-dozen theatres English translations, adaptations, versions, or perversions of French plays are now being performed, to say nothing of the French comedians in possession of the Adelphi and the Lyric. It is but a passing cloud; and the critic concerned for the vitality and the honour of the native drama has nothing more to disturb his mind than the poor opinion that flying visitors may form of the theatre in this country. If that cannot do us any good, it cannot do us any harm.

The scramble for French plays will soon be over. The French stage at present is not well off; there is not much to be borrowed in that quarter; and one might as well attempt to revive Queen Anne as to bring back the old French dramas. The success obtained at the Haymarket for Mr. Sydney Grundy's translation of *Un Mariage sous Louis XV.* has directed the attention of the resurrectionists to Alexandre Dumas, and Mr. Grundy is not the only dramatist who has prepared a new translation of *Mlle. de Belle-Isle*, of which more adaptations than one have already been seen on the London stage. Mr. Grundy, who has wit and invention of his own, might well leave to the hacks who have neither one nor the other the journeyman's work of translation. Translations may be well done, and they may be ill done, but they are best not done at all; and Mr. Grundy himself furnishes us with a reason for saying so when he offers us his versions of the French plays instead of the original plays he has given us the right to expect from him. Every translation keeps off the stage a work by a native dramatist. M. Francisque Sarcey, the French critic, once said to me, with characteristic candour, that if Dr. Ibsen's plays really justified

the absurd praises lavished upon them by their zealous admirers, he did not wish to have them in Paris. The French stage for the French: that is his policy. I am not so conservative. Give me a pleasant evening's entertainment at the play, and I am grateful; but I prefer not to be indebted to a French author for my amusement. That is a feeling which does not trouble the playgoer or the theatrical manager. With the playgoer it is solely a question of pleasure; with the manager it is a matter of business. The critic who has some respect for himself and for his calling may be allowed, if I am not misapprehending the function of the critic in thinking it is his business to direct taste in the right direction—the critic of the theatre, I say, may consider the production at any theatre in its relation to the interests of the Drama.

Upon the question of importing foreign plays, instead of making our own, I am aware that my opinions are not shared by other critics, whose opinions carry more weight than my own. That uninstructed writers in unconsidered newspapers differ from me does not surprise me, nor does it distress me—"c'est un éloge, et non pas une injure." A writer who is capable of saying that Mr. Sydney Grundy "has written nothing wittier" than his translation of *Un Mariage sous Louis XV.* does Alexandre Dumas an injustice, and parades his ignorance of the brilliant original work which Mr. Grundy himself has done. That I find an opponent in Mr. William Archer is not so indifferent to me. Mr. Archer has disclaimed a prejudice, of which he imagines he has been suspected, against translations. Surely a writer who has worked so untiringly to obtain a hearing for the Norwegian drama on the London stage was open to no such suspicion. I hope we shall have English plays at his Endowed Theatre, when he gets it. Mr. Archer has expressed himself in complimentary terms with regard to the "translation" of *Un Mariage sous Louis XV.* His criticism of the "translation" perhaps would have more value if he did not frankly indicate that he has not read the French play. But one can never be sure of Mr. Archer, and I am glad to have him on my side in his opinion of the recent "adaptation" of Augier's *Mariage d'Olympe*, which he compares mercilessly with the original, in which, if, by the way, I may correct a trifling blunder in Mr. Archer's criticism, the scene is not laid in France, but in Germany.

Of course, it is only the critics who institute such comparisons. The public are satisfied to take their amusement where they find it. In the case of the translation of *Le*

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MME. RÉJANE AS MME. SANS-GÊNE.

Mariage d'Olympe, the writer of the English version remained anonymous, and the authorship of the piece was ascribed to Augier. If the adapter had claimed it for his own it would not have been more unfair to the French dramatist. Mr. Grundy acknowledges his indebtedness to Alexandre Dumas for *A Marriage of Convenience*, and this has been counted to him for righteousness. But it does not cancel the debt, and I think Mr. Grundy would have shown more sense of obligation if he had refrained from appearing before the curtain at the Haymarket Theatre. I hold—and I hold firmly—to the opinion that translators should leave, at least, the honour of appearing before an audience to the dramatists who give us the original work of their own brains. The applause in the case of a translation is not so much for the translator as for the play he translates; and if the public do not distinguish between them, it is, as I understand it, the duty of the critic to do so.

At the Play.

IN LONDON.

AMONG the most pleasurable events of the past month was the revival, on the evening of June 10, of T. W. Robertson's comedy *Caste*, by Mr. John Hare, at the Court Theatre. Mr. Hare himself has now abandoned his old part of Sam Gerridge in favour of that of Eccles. Of this he presents a rendering differing in many respects from that furnished by Mr. George Honey or Mr. David James, but hardly less satisfactory than either. Mr. Hare gives to Eccles a dash of faded respectability that is not wholly the result of simple intemperance. The old man is altogether a cleanlier and more wholesome creature than we knew of yore, albeit no less ready to indulge his iconoclastic desires to bring the mighty low. Revivals have also been the order of the day at Her Majesty's, where Mr. Tree has been attracting crowded houses with *Trilby*, *The Red Lamp*, and *The Ballad Monger*.

Madame Sarah Bernhardt at the Adelphi.

So accustomed have we become to an annual visit from Madame Bernhardt that a season without her would seem a little profitless. This year, however, no such disappointment awaited the admirers of the great French actress, who on June 17 made her London *rentrée* at the Adelphi in Alfred de Musset's four-act drama *Lorenzaccio*, as adapted by M. Armand D'Artois. The play itself is a heavy and cumbersome affair, quite unfitted in its original form, as the author himself acknowledged, for stage presentation. Of the plot some details were given by our Paris correspondent in the January number of this magazine, and it is therefore unnecessary to go over the ground again. Hoarseness, the result of a slight cold, prevented Madame Bernhardt from at first doing complete justice either to herself or the part, but as she warmed to her work it speedily became evident that her voice was as beautiful and her power as brilliant as ever. The character of Lorenzaccio is one in which passion, feeling, and even humour are effectively combined, and in every one of

these phases Madame Bernhardt rose to the height of her wonderful genius. The company by which she is surrounded, if not great in any sense, is at least fairly adequate to the demands made upon it, and special mention should be made of M. Brément as Philippo Strozzi, M. Darmont as Alexandre de Médicis, M. Angelo as Scoronconcolo, and Madame Blanche Dufrene as the Marquise Cibo.

A Marriage of Convenience.

A Version of Alexandre Dumas' Comedy, in Four Acts, "Un Mariage sous Louis XV.," by Sydney Grundy. Produced at the Haymarket Theatre, June 5.

Comte de Candale .. Mr. William Terriss	A Suisse .. ..Mr. H. H. Welch
Chevalier de Valclos .. ..Mr. Cyril Maude	A Footman .. .. Mr. Sutton Barnes
The General .. .. Mr. Sydney Valentine	Marton .. .. Miss Adrienne Dairolles
Jasmin .. .. .. Mr. Holman Clark	Comtesse de Candale .. Miss Winifred Emery
An Officer.. .. Mr. Clarence Blakeston	

Mr. Sydney Grundy possesses an enviable and almost unique talent for unearthing half-forgotten foreign masterpieces and refurbishing them for the use and benefit of the British public. It will hardly be contended that the practice belongs to the highest form of art, or that it is one of which a playwright has any reason to be unduly proud. It might even be suggested that a dramatist, himself capable of original work, would study his reputation more by leaving such exercises to the hack-writers who, having no ideas of their own, are forced to fall back on those of others. Throughout his entire career, Mr. Grundy, however, has shown a marked inclination to profit by the labours of those who have gone before him, his greatest successes having, in point of fact, been achieved in the realm of adaptation. That he is a witty and clever writer we have always been ready to admit, but that his power to construct a story suitable to stage presentation is of the second and not the first order we are no less bound to maintain. It is probably the consciousness of this truth that constantly drives Mr. Grundy to seek for inspiration at the fountain of the French drama, and which apparently renders him dubious of his own unaided talents. But surely it is only by assiduous cultivation that these can ever be brought to a state of maturity. Let Mr. Grundy be advised. One original work is worth a dozen adaptations; for, even if unsuccessful in itself, it is always valuable as a stepping-stone to better things Mr. Pinero and Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, by abandoning at an early stage of their careers the easy process of ascending Parnassus on another man's back, have set an example which not only Mr. Grundy, but all English dramatists, would do well to follow.

A Marriage of Convenience, despite its curiously infelicitous title, is a brilliant and an ingenious piece of work. For this, how-

ever, the main part of the credit is due to Alexandre Dumas and not to Mr. Grundy, whose "version" is most happy when most closely related to the original. The intrigue is, of course, purely artificial, and perhaps a trifle too attenuated for four acts. But it is handled with considerable skill, the interest of the audience being seldom permitted to slacken during the course of the performance. The action takes place in Paris about the middle of the last century, in the house of the Comte de Candale, who has just married a young girl, fresh from a convent, not, be it understood, from any sentimental reasons, but solely as a matter of convenience. The Countess, meanwhile, fancies herself in love with an old admirer, the Chevalier de Valclos; and as the Count also has bestowed his affections elsewhere, the two agree to allow each other perfect liberty. But as, little by little, circumstances force them together, a better understanding is provoked and eventually they are compelled to acknowledge that love has taken the place of indifference in their hearts. The great mistake committed by Mr. Grundy, and by Mr. Cyril Maude in his interpretation of the part, is the transformation of the Count's rival, the Chevalier de Valclos, into a fatuous buffoon. The whole balance of the piece is in this way overthrown, and its effect materially injured. It is an artistic error, for which author and actor alike are to be most strongly condemned. As the heroine, Miss Winifred Emery played with great spirit and a dainty sense of humour that, but for a slight trace of peevishness, would have been perfect. Mr. William Terriss made a gallant and dignified Count, with just a touch of the Adelphi hero in him. As the Countess's serving-maid, Marton, Miss Adrienne Dairolles was inimitable, and the remaining characters were in excellent hands.

Settled Out of Court.

A Play in Four Acts, by Estelle Burney. Produced at the Globe Theatre, June 3.

Sir Gerald Delacourt..	..Mr. Lewis Waller	Francois..	Mr. Wilton Heriot
Lord Mottram of the Peak	Mr. Charles Fulton	Mrs. Alleyn	Miss Granville
The Hon. Bobby Haigh	Mr. Sydney Brough	Lady Helena St. Quentin	..Miss Frances Ivor
Morris	.. Mr. Holmes-Gore	Moyra	Miss Janette Steer

There is much to praise, if there is also something to condemn, in Miss Estelle Burney's new play, *Settled Out of Court*. As the first important work from the writer's pen, the piece, despite its obvious crudities, affords grounds for the belief that in Miss Burney we have a playwright who in time will make for herself a solid reputation. At present her methods smack somewhat of the novice's; she has not yet quite caught the true perspective of the theatre; her situations are insufficiently prepared for, and the effects she aims at consequently remain unconvincing.

But she possesses, on the other hand, a nice gift of observation and a ready sense of wit, of which, however, cynicism rather than geniality is the prevailing quality. Like most beginners, she appears, characteristically enough, to be attracted by the meaner side of life, and her play ends with a note intended to be tragic, but really melodramatic. Scenes there are, notwithstanding, in *Settled Out of Court* of genuine merit, while in two instances at least the character-drawing is quite admirable. Miss Burney starts gruesomely, nor throughout the play is she tempted to throw athwart the gloom of her story one ray of light. This is a distinct mistake, seeing that in contrast lie the chief power and merit of the playwright. Such errors are, however, the errors of youth, and doubtless Miss Burney will see her way to correct them in the course of time. Meanwhile, her ability is undoubted, and can hardly fail to produce results of an even more favourable description than those yielded by *Settled Out of Court*.

Moyra, unhappily wedded, has fallen a victim to the fascinations of Sir Gerald Delacourt, an easy-going, pleasure-seeking libertine. Eager to put an end to a life of shameful deception, Moyra proposes that they should fly together, when an accident brings about the death of her husband and leaves the guilty couple free to wed. Marriage is speedily followed by disillusionment; Sir Gerald tires of his uxorious spouse, while Moyra herself relapses into a constant state of angry jealousy, caused by her husband's attentions to other women, and especially to a certain Mrs. Alleyn, who at a former period had been Sir Gerald's mistress. Mrs. Alleyn herself spares no effort to lure her old lover back to her side, and with such success that eventually he leaves his own house to accompany her to London. The truth is brought to Moyra's knowledge, the result being that she, always of an hysterical temperament, loses her reason. Starting in pursuit, she runs the pair to earth at her husband's old chambers, and snatching up a dagger, plunges it into his heart. Upon this situation the curtain falls. As Sir Gerald, Mr. Lewis Waller furnished a masterly piece of acting. The part is drawn with conspicuous ability, and every phase of it was shown by Mr. Waller with marked cleverness. Mr. Charles Fulton, as Lord Mottram, the good genius of the piece, gave a beautiful portrait of an earnest, self-denying, and dignified man, while smaller characters were adequately sustained by Mr. Sydney Brough, Mr. Wilton Heriot, and Miss Frances Ivor. In Mrs. Alleyn, Miss Granville had a difficult but exceedingly showy part to handle. Unfortunately she lacks the experience required to do it full justice, although occasionally she contrived to strike the

right note. To Miss Janette Steer's performance as Moyra we can give but little praise. Miss Steer has apparently no idea of the value of restraint; she tears her passion to ribbons, and floods the stage with her emotion. This is not acting, but ranting.

For the Honour of the Family.

A Comedy-Drama, in Three Acts, adapted from Emile Augier's "Mariage d'Olympe." Produced at the Comedy Theatre, June 10.

Duke of MacIlvray .. Mr. Edmund Gurney	Duchess of MacIlvray Mrs. Theodore Wright
Lord Ullswater .. Mr. Laurence Cautley	Lady Hilda .. .. .. Miss Lena Dene
Sir Vincent Grisedale .. .. .. Mr. Bell	Mrs. Ritchie .. Mrs. Rose Vernon-Paget
Tommy Wickslow .. ..Mr. Willis Searle	Lady Ullswater .. Miss Eleanor Lane
Cyril Percy .. .. .. Mr. Cairns James	

Some day, perhaps, when our respect for *belles lettres* has reached a higher level than it stands on now, we shall see a law passed restraining all but duly qualified practitioners from meddling with literary masterpieces. Were such an edict in force at the present moment, the anonymous adapter of Augier's *Le Mariage d'Olympe* would certainly be called upon to suffer condign punishment for his temerity. *For the Honour of the Family* has, in truth, but the faintest resemblance to the original work upon which it is based. The story is transferred from Germany to Scotland, and in the course of transplantation has been vulgarised and spoiled. By a process easily understood the adapter has contrived to denude the piece of all its wit and brilliancy, and has left it little better than a graceless skeleton. Augier's characters, moreover, are essentially French, and their actions correspond with a fidelity not to be gainsaid to their nationality. In the adaptation an endeavour is made to reconcile them with Scottish customs and manners, but the attempt is singularly unsuccessful. The plot of the piece is tolerably familiar. Lady Ullswater, prior to her marriage, has been an actress of notorious reputation. Having spread abroad the report of her own death, she succeeds under another name in ensnaring the nephew of the Duke of MacIlvray, and eventually in turning the old man's dislike of her into affection. But the humdrum life at Castle MacIlvray wearies her, and she endeavours to vary its monotony by flirting with an outrageous little cad called Tommy Wickslow, whom she allows to present her with a costly diamond necklet. Alleviation also arrives in the person of her mother, an atrociously vulgar old lady, who, in company with her daughter and a couple of rowdy friends, proceeds to make merry at her son-in-law's expense. Eventually the truth leaks out; and the Duke, discovering that the family name stands in danger of being dishonoured by his nephew's wife, shoots her down as one might a dog. The avowed object of the matinée was to provide Miss Eleanor Lane, an American actress, with a chance of displaying her acting abilities. That these are great we cannot honestly

declare, but with careful training and additional experience there is no reason why she should not ripen into a fair actress. The remainder of the cast was, at any rate, quite good enough for the occasion.

All Alive, Oh!

Farce in Three Acts, by A. Bisson and A. Sylvani. Produced at the Strand Theatre, June 16.

Chetwynd Green .. Mr. Arthur Bourchier	John Drake .. .. Mr. Mark Kinghorne
Jude Bordle .. .. .. Mr. Fred Thorne	Stupples .. .. Mr. James Leigh
Sir George Burlington, K.C.S.I. Mr. Gerald Biron	Mrs. Bordle .. Miss Phyllis Broughton
	Mrs. Crozier .. .. Miss Ada Sentance
Jacob Caratstein .. Mr. Coventry Davies	Myra Wensleydale .. Miss May Palfrey
William Crebbin .. Mr. Compton Coutts	Andromeda .. .. .. Miss Helen Rous

The deterioration in the quality of farces imported from France has of late been exceedingly marked, and certainly *All Alive, Oh*, is not calculated to increase our respect for the purveyors of that particular description of dramatic ware. One might forgive the flimsiness of the plot, the improbability of the situations, and the incoherency of the intrigue, if only the authors had succeeded in infusing into their piece a little semblance of genuine fun and acceptable humour. But the farce is as dull as it is silly—an unpardonable combination in the eyes of all playgoers, except, perhaps, of those who are amused by horseplay and satisfied with buffoonery. For no particular reason a certain Chetwynd Green, an artist, determines to disappear, leaving behind him a couple of wills, differently worded, bequeathing his property to two ladies, both of whom have obliged him by sitting as models for Joséphine, Empress of the French. During his absence, Green, who is now supposed to be dead, marries a lady called Wensleydale, whose name he is compelled to take. Meantime, his relations, convoked by an impossible lawyer, assemble in his studio to settle the question of succession. Green, returning, takes the place of a lay figure, and thus disguised is enabled to overhear all that occurs. The third act is devoted to the humours of a sale by auction, followed by Green's disclosure of himself. Anything more futile or childish than the whole thing it would be difficult to conceive. The piece, moreover, except in one or two instances, was exceedingly badly acted. Only to Mr. Mark Kinghorne, Mr. James Leigh, Miss May Palfrey, and Miss Helen Rous can praise be given. Of the others it is kindest to say nothing.

The County Fair.

A Picture of New England Life, in Four Acts, by Charles Barnard. Produced at the Princess's Theatre, June 5.

Abigail Prue .. .. .. Mr. Neil Burgess	Sally Greenaway .. .. Miss Essex Dane
Otis Tucker .. .. Mr. Edward S. Metcalfe	Maria Perkins .. .. Miss Ray Scott
Solon Hammerhead .. .. Mr. Cecil Elgar	Little Tony .. .. .. Mr. W. Painter
Tim the Tanner .. Mr. Ridgewood Barrie	Markham .. .. Mr. Henry Walters
Joel Bartlett .. .. Mr. Laurence Cautley	Fredericks .. .. Mr. Charles Daintry
Bill Parker .. .. .. Mr. James A. Leahy	Taggs .. .. Miss Emma Pollock
Cold Molasses .. .. .. Running Treacle	

The author of *The County Fair* has very wisely refrained from describing his piece as a play, preferring to speak of it merely as "a picture." Under the circumstances to demand that it should contain a direct and coherent story might be to ask too much. Mr. Barnard, nevertheless, makes a valiant attempt to introduce into it something in the nature of a plot, although, truth to tell, his efforts are not by any means too successful. The principal character, the sole *raison d'etre* of the drama indeed, is a certain Abigail Prue, who has fallen into difficulties likely to lead to the loss of her farm and all her stock, when a young fellow, having discovered among the latter a promising colt, asks and obtains permission to train it for the great race which takes place annually at the County Fair. Needless to say the colt wins, and so succeeds in rescuing Abigail Prue from her embarrassing position. Mr. Neil Burgess, an American actor, played the part of Abigail with great drollery and without the least suggestion of anything approaching offensiveness. A clever bit of character acting was also provided by Miss Emma Pollock as Taggs, while the remainder of the cast was fairly efficient. The novelty of the production is, of course, the revolving race-course, which is very ingeniously contrived to give the impression of real horses galloping over the ground at headlong speed.

The Maid of Athens.

A Musical Play in Two Acts. Libretto by Charles Edmund and Chance Newton. Music by F. Osmond Carr. Produced at the Opera Comique Theatre, June 3.

The O'Grady .. .. ..Mr. E. J. Lonnen	De Belvidere .. .. ..Mr. Fred Storey
Major Treherne .. .. .. Mr. W. Elton	Ambrosia .. .. .. Miss Cicely Richards
Seymour .. .. Mr. Chas. Weir	Ina .. .. Miss Claire Romaine
Marlow .. .. Mr. Percy Brough	Maid of Athens .. Miss Constance Collier
Lord Alfred Fitz Clarence Mr. Cecil Ramsey	Chloris .. .. .. Miss Ettie Williams
Branks .. .. .. Mr. St. John Hamund	Topsy St. Leger .. Mdlle. Louise Beaudet

As far as the libretto is concerned, *The Maid of Athens* calls for no criticism. It is as destitute of wit, ingenuity, and plausibility as a highlander of trousers. Nor is there much to be said for Dr. Osmond Carr's music, which is distinctly below the level of most of that composer's former work. How far pretty dresses and lively acting will be accepted by the public as sufficient counterweights for the lack of these things time will show. We have our own ideas, as well as our own hopes, on the subject, but upon these there is not at present any urgent necessity to enter. As the authors have neglected to introduce any story into their work we are consequently relieved from the difficult task of endeavouring to describe their plot. Nor do we feel moved to linger over the

performance. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*, and what can be expected of a company that is afforded no opportunities?

An Irish Gentleman.

A Play in Three Acts, by David Christie Murray and John L. Shine. Produced at the Globe Theatre June 9.

Gerald Dorsay	Mr. John L. Shine	Bill Horsley.. ..	.. Mr. Howard Russell
Dorsay Dillon ..	.. Mr. H. Reeves Smith	Ellaleen Dunrayne ..	Miss Eva Moore
Mr. MacQuarrie	Mr. J. B. Gordon	Mrs. Dunrayne ..	Mrs. George Canninge
Tim Kelly	.. Mr. Richard Purdon	Constance	.. Miss Lilian Menelly
Lord Avon	Mr. T. Kingston	Katty	.. Miss Kate Kearney
Daley Doyle..	Mr. J. L. Mackay		

The authors of *An Irish Gentleman* have apparently led a life of absolute seclusion during the past twenty years. Otherwise it is difficult to understand how they could suppose that a play so much behind the time, so utterly unreal and theatrical, could find favour with the public. Nor do they possess the skill and the imagination which enabled Dion Boucicault successfully to work upon the lines they appear deliberately to have adopted. Artificial and mechanical as Boucicault's pieces are in many respects, there is nevertheless about them a redeeming flavour of humanity that serves to render them acceptable even to-day. Nothing of this is to be found in *An Irish Gentleman*, the story of which is simply preposterous and the characterisation absurd. The hero, Gerald Dorsay, is one of those impossible creatures who seem to believe that honour is sufficiently satisfied if, while eluding their legitimate creditors, they bestow a copper upon a whimpering beggar. Gerald, in short, is the typical stage Irishman, who devotes his life to fox-hunting, whisky-drinking, and the singing of comic or sentimental songs, and who possesses about as much real moral sense as an unregenerate Chinaman. Having plunged into debt, he finds nothing to do but to marry his pretty cousin, Ellaleen, and so secure a fortune for himself. This step, however, he hesitates to take. Meanwhile his debts have been bought up by a scheming cousin, Dorsay Dillon, and his accomplice, a rascally Scotchman, named Mr. MacQuarrie, in the hope that, by ruining Gerald, the girl will fall an easy prey to Dorsay. Fortunately, Gerald succeeds in getting away to New Zealand, where, in the second act, he seems to have recovered his moral balance, and to have turned teetotaller. One by one, all the remaining characters put in an appearance. Dorsay and MacQuarrie, still intent upon their nefarious purpose, contrive to drug Gerald's tea—the only stimulant he allows himself—and Ellaleen consequently discovers him in what she believes to be a helpless state of intoxication. In the last act the villains, of course, are run to earth, and hero and heroine made happy in

each others' arms. As Gerald, Mr. J. L. Shine acted with considerable humour—which humour did not prevent him from bursting into song in and out of season—and a fair amount of tenderness. Mr. Reeves Smith, although rather handicapped by the nature of the part, made an acceptable villain; Mr. J. L. Mackay gave an exceedingly clever sketch of a broken-down gentleman; and Miss Eva Moore, as Ellaleen, played with the most delightful witchery and feeling. But quite the best piece of acting came from J. B. Gordon, whose MacQuarrie was an impersonation of extraordinary merit. As the ingénue of the piece, Miss Lilian Menelly revealed incapacity of a first-class order.

The progress of the Opera season during the early part of June was considerably upset by the indisposition of M. Jean de Reszke, who was rendered *hors de combat* for a fortnight by an attack of influenza, followed by severe bronchial irritation. The reappearance of the popular tenor was, however, signalised by two very remarkable Wagnerian performances, his superb assumption of Tristan on the night of his *rentrée* being followed shortly afterwards by a no less magnificent embodiment of *Siegfried*—now seen for the first time in this country. M. de Reszke's triumph in *Tristan und Isolde* was shared to some extent by the new Isolde, Fräulein Sedlmair (a soprano from Vienna), while in *Siegfried* he was admirably supported by his brother as the Wanderer, and by that ideal Mime, Herr Lieban. Mr. David Bispham also did splendid work in both music-dramas as Kurwenal and Alberich, and Herr Anton Seidl once more proved himself a truly great conductor. The Diamond Jubilee State performance on June 23rd was notable for the return of Mme. Melba, who appeared with M. Jean de Reszke in the third act of *Roméo et Juliette*.

IN PARIS.

The Théâtre Français has produced *Frédégonde*, a five-act drama in verse, by M. Alfred Dubout. This is the first piece of a new author, and betrays the fact at every turn. It is confused; it is ineffective in parts; it is encumbered with more corpses than *Hamlet*; it has most abominable verses. Surely the shade of Molière must have writhed to hear *veines* and *vaines* spoken as rhymes by an actor in his own theatre? Nevertheless, *Frédégonde* shows talent of a high order in its dramatic situations, and we are not surprised at the success which it achieved. Imaginative power such as M. Dubout possesses is rare and most valuable. Frédégonde is a queen of the greatest versatility in crime, if the expression may be permitted. Crimes contemplated, achieved,

exulted over, but never repented of, fill her days and decimate her subjects. Suddenly she resolves to forestall her disclosure to the Bishop Prétaxtat by herself revealing to him, under seal of confession, a murderous conspiracy in which she is engaged. Prétaxtat is at prayer in his chapel. Frédégonde enters, goes to the confessional, and there pours out the history of her crimes to the listening bishop. The bishop cries that he will stop the intended murder, but the adroit queen confronts him. "Sacrilege!" she answers, defiantly; "the secrets of confession are sacred." He forgets his priestly office, and furiously seizes a heavy candlestick from the altar. But, even as he is raising it to strike her down, far away in the church is heard a chant. The old priest drops his weapon. Suddenly recalled to himself, and while Frédégonde, terrified, escapes, he falls on his knees and joins in the *penitential* chant. It is a fine climax to the scene, in which Mme. Dudlay and M. Paul Mounet were beyond praise. M. Mounet-Sully, as a hero, was less excellent than usual.

The great theatrical event of the past week has been the appearance of Mme. Duse at the Renaissance. Although speaking a language unknown to many of her audience, no one has had a warmer reception in Paris, or achieved a greater success, than the Italian actress. Eleanora Duse has had the courage to decline all the aids of dramatic tradition, to show herself independent of the old tricks of stage effect, and, while playing well-known parts, to develop boldly her own original method. Whether this method will live, whether she is the founder of a new school, time will show; but she herself defies criticism by the completeness, the perfect coherence of her conception of art. It is to take or to leave; it cannot be improved upon in its own way. What a contrast between her method and that of the great actress in whose own theatre she is now playing! What a study for those who have seen Mme. Bernhardt in the *Dame aux Camélias*, and who now see the Marguerite of Signora Duse's creating—a Marguerite entirely different, and, as many think, infinitely more touching. For Madame Duse has the rare gift of making her audience in love with her. She may not arouse the admiration that other great players arouse; she never conquers her audience by the astonishment which her own power creates in them. But she gradually wins them to an electric sympathy with the heroine she is representing which is irresistible. It can hardly be said of Signora Duse that she plays her part. She lives it; she never departs from nature; we have never even seen her "take the stage." It has been said as an objection that

her Marguerite is too virginal, but, if we read her meaning aright, she aims at presenting the possibility of a woman's heart remaining untouched even by the horrible life which circumstances and birth have forced upon her, and awaking to purity at the touch of a genuine love, the beauty of which is increased a thousand-fold by the contrast of all that preceded it in her knowledge of the world. This new life she shows us in its dawn, its growth, its final absorption, and its victory of renunciation; and, whatever be the criticisms which her conception evokes in different minds, it is intensely touching and moving, and we cannot doubt that the *Dame aux Camélias* will be remembered as one of the most successful parts of one of the most fascinating actresses of the day.

IN BERLIN.

The past month has been unusually prolific in new plays and revivals. Mosenthal's *Deborah* (the original of *Leah*) was a favourite play in the early sixties, and on its revival at the Berliner Theater towards the end of May was received with every token of approval. It is well-constructed and trenchantly written, and forms a powerful counterblast to the blatant anti-Semitism which seems to be spreading into every grade of society. Fräulein Popischil, as the Jewess, did full justice to her telling and excellent part, and Herr Hahn as Joseph, and Dr. Pohl as an aged Jew, were conspicuous among a very able company. The ever-welcome *Die Rauber* has again been revived, this time with Herr Kainz in the chief part. His delivery of Franz Moor's long speeches was unexceptionable. Compared with other interpreters of the *rôle*, he stands at least in the front rank.

A comedy of Lope de Vega is almost certain to repay the labours of a judicious and capable German adapter, and to describe Herr Zabel as such is certainly not to over-rate his powers. *Die Schone Toledanerin*, produced at the Schauspielhaus, is a play of the days when chivalry was declining, and when the Renaissance had hardly yet begun. The primitive motives of murder and jealousy, uncomplicated by any minor issues, form the mainsprings of the story; and the action is assisted by disguises that could not possibly have deceived anyone. Fräulein Lindner, who had the largest number of opportunities, acquitted herself with more than ordinary credit as a Spanish wife who, despite some wayward tendencies, has a genuine love for her husband. This was preceded by *Der Tod des Tiberius*, a one-act drama by Herr Wilhelm Henzen.

It is an effective story of the last hours of the Emperor Tiberius, and, though short, afforded excellent chances to Fräulein Lindner, Herr Grube (Tiberius), and Herr Matowsky.

Un Lichte de Wahrheit, a comedy by Herr Conimor, has been produced at the Friedrich Wilhelm Stadtisches. It deals with the comparative practical difficulty of uniform veracity in all circumstances, and the idea is developed with much ingenuity. *Papa Nitsche*, though certainly not a failure, has met with the coolest reception among the novelties of the month. It was produced at the Schiller Theater, and is a farce from the pens of Herren Walther and Stein. It was saved from condemnation by the efforts of a brilliant cast. Björnson's *Ueber unsere Kraft*, a heavy, gruesome, but withal forceful drama, revealing at every turn of the dialogue its co-nationality with the works of Ibsen, has been performed with conspicuous success by the Neue Freie Volksbühne Verein at the Theater des Westens. A strike of workmen, the wretched hovels that shelter them, the bloated employers who in the great scene of the play are all blown up together by dynamite at the instigation of a fanatical agitation—all these might have formed part of one of Ibsen's more gloomy pieces. Herr Firle, as an employer, and Herren Eisfeld and Haid, as two well-differentiated labour agitators, were conspicuous among the players.

IN VIENNA.

Under the title of *Das Grosse Welttheater*, one of Calderon's *Autos Sacramentales*, the sacred plays which used to be performed in Spain on the festival of Corpus Christi and other solemn occasions, was recently produced here in the Arcadenhof of the Town Hall in the presence of a large assembly. The performance was a marked success, and to that issue the circumtances amid which the production took place contributed in no small measure. The Arcadenhof is open to the sky, and consequently a great deal depended upon the weather which might be meted out for the occasion. Happily, a canopy of cloudless blue, accompanied by scarcely a breath of wind to disturb the acoustics of the Hof, presented itself on the appointed day. A noteworthy point in connection with the performance—which, after all, was in the nature of an experiment—was the reproduction of the simple accompaniments in use at the time when the *Autos Sacramentales* were in vogue and bore all their intended solemn significance. At one end of the Hof was erected a stage in three parts, which was chiefly striking through the simplicity of its adornment, and before it were placed a small orchestra of wind

instruments and two separate bodies of singers, one consisting of men and the other of women. Dr. von Kralik had composed a number of introductory and other airs appropriate to the theme of the play, and the careful rendering of these contributed its part to the successful issue of the experiment.

Das Kuckucksei, a four-act drama by Herr Oskar Fronz, is undoubtedly an interesting work, though it derives that quality chiefly from the remarkable success with which the author has openly contravened all the most important tenets of the conventional playwright's code of morality. Among the characters whom it presents to us is Frau Gerbler, a lady whose views of things moral are not hampered by any too inconvenient limits, and who has undertaken the charge of her orphan niece with the sinister object of turning the poor girl's natural beauty to material account. This dastardly plan is duly carried out, but soon after, at the age of nineteen, the niece dies. The sum for which Frau Gerbler had practically sold the unfortunate girl to a particular establishment not having at the time of her death been paid over, the manager of the place takes advantage of the situation to repudiate liability for the amount. Frau Gerbler is, however, a woman of resource, and immediately bethinks herself of Fanny, another orphan niece, whom she had formerly treated with contemptuous neglect on account of her general plainness and lack of spirit, but who has since become part of the household of an elderly bachelor and gradually developed into a very fine young woman. Yielding, after some consideration, to the seductions of her heartless old aunt, Fanny says farewell to her elderly companion and also to a more youthful lover who hoped to make her his wife as soon as he was in a position to do so, and takes the place of her dead sister. She does not, however, settle down at all easily to her new life, and, although strictly forbidden to do so, writes letter after letter to her old friend and her young lover, which are all intercepted and destroyed. Her lover, nevertheless, has not given up all hope, but strives persistently to communicate with her, and eventually succeeds in breaking into the house just in the nick of time to save her from the violence of the man who has "purchased" her. The young man then turns upon Fanny, and in passionate terms reproaches her with the life she is leading, and concludes with the use of an epithet of unmistakable significance. Thereupon, the girl, broken-hearted, and overcome with shame, rushes from the house. Here the unsavoury story practically ends. The drama was produced at the Volks Theater, and met with an undoubtedly favourable reception. Frau Martinelli, Fräulein

Glöckner, and Herren Martinelli, Weisse, Giampietro and Amon played the leading parts.

IN ITALIAN CITIES.

Signora Gemma Ferruggia's play, *Amata Desclée*, achieved but poor success when produced at the Manzoni, Milan, but, in view of the peculiar character of the work, it is not likely that the authoress will receive much sympathy at this result of her hard work. The play deals with four episodes in the life of the great French actress, whose name it bears as its title, and is chiefly remarkable for the freedom with which Signora Ferruggia has introduced into it several distinguished personages but recently dead, and one person who is still living. The latter person is an Italian gentleman who holds an important post in the diplomatic world, and the question has been seriously discussed whether he has any means of obtaining redress. It is said, however, that, according to Italian law, he has none. *Societa Gerosolimitana* is a new drama in three acts, written by Signor G. C. Ferrario. Played by the Farrati company at the Teatro Balbo, Turin, it secured a flattering success. Although described by its author as a drama, it would be more correctly termed a study of local colour and costume; but, all the same, it provides several scenes in which good acting may find its opportunity. *Gli Ultimi d'Alcamo*, the latest work from the pen of Duke Carafa d'Audria, reproduces the last few stages in the gradual financial and moral ruin of a noble family in Napoleonic times. The distinguished author has shown considerable gifts in the manner in which he has reproduced the atmosphere of the period; but he has exhibited an unfortunate lack of constructive skill, and the faults due to this shortcoming kept the performance, which took place at Milan, somewhat short of being an entire success. A similar result attended the production of Signor G. Baffico's *Il Prodigio* in the same city. It is a drama depicting incidents in the daily life of a bourgeois family contemplated from a pessimistic point of view.

IN MADRID.

Señores Jaques and Brull have collaborated to produce a lyrical play of the Zarzuela type, to which they have given the title, *El Angel Caido* (The Fallen Angel), apparently with an application both to the statue near which the chief incidents take place, and, more remotely, to the conduct of the characters who supply the motive for the plot. The play is never likely

to be placed in the front rank of its order, for it contains inconsistencies of a singular character, but a certain grace of composition and an undoubted novelty in regard to plot served to save it from misfortune. The central figures of the story are Pascuala and Regina, two young *demi-mondaines*, each of whom considers that she has sole claim to the attentions of a loose-living, brainless young count. After wrangling over the question for some time, they at length resolve to settle the matter by recourse to arms, and arrange a duel with cold steel under the shadow of the before-mentioned statue. They duly arrive on the scene, attended by female seconds, and, stripping themselves to a needlessly airy degree, proceed to engage. The combat is, however, interrupted before any damage is done, and the play concludes with a kind of homily pronounced by Regina on the subject of fallen angels in general.

IN NEW YORK.

There are but few new productions to record this month, and of these few none are of the first importance. *The Alderman*, previously seen at Philadelphia, has made its first appearance here at the Fourteenth Street Theatre. Mr. Odell Williams, in the principal part, gives a faithful rendering of the American politician of to-day. The author, Mr. William Gill, has thrown much light into many dark corners, and proves that he possesses a knowledge of the present political system at once "extensive and peculiar." Miss Marian Abbott offers a true—too true—portrait of a type every day becoming more common—the woman of politics. The week preceding *The Alderman* saw, at the same theatre, *The Widow Goldstein*, a play rightfully described as a farcical comedy, but really an old-fashioned melodrama treated in the farcical style. "Speciality" performances, not many degrees removed from the music-hall turn, were frequently interpolated, which doubtless added to the measure of success that attended this hybrid entertainment. At the Knickerbocker Theatre a matinée of *The Merchant of Venice* was presented for the purpose of exploiting as Portia an amateur who was quite unequal to the varying demands of the character. *A Round of Pleasure*, produced at the same theatre, at once found favour. Judged by its own standard, it is no doubt very good, and when the inevitable polishing process is finished it may be counted upon to please New Yorkers for a long term. An especially clever company, though not comprising any recognised metropolitan favourite, display their abilities to the best advantage.

The book, by Mr. Sydney Rosenfeld, and the music of Mr. Ludwig Englander deserve an equal, albeit faint meed of praise. One song, "Everybody knows my name," was exceptionally good in verse and music. An annual event to which people now look forward with more than ordinary anticipation is the winding up of the season at the Casino. It is to New York what pantomime is to London; but, as the Casino fare is intended exclusively for adult consumption, the meat is proportionately stronger. *The Whirl of the Town* is, to use the official description, "the fourth annual review," and is every whit as bright and as clever as its predecessors. The plays and principal events of the year are unsparingly satirised, the actors are made up to represent one public character and then another, even caricaturing each other, and in the street scenes (now an indispensable accessory to every musical farce) it is amusing to watch the notabilities who pass unconcernedly along as the action proceeds. *The Circus Girl* and *The Girl from Paris* still find admirers at Daly's and the Herald Square, and the *Mysterious Mr. Bugle*, though now in its last week, has by no means exhausted its popularity. *Under the Red Robe*, produced at the beginning of the year, shows yet no sign of decreasing public favour.

Echoes from the Green Room.

Not the least important and interesting of the Diamond Jubilee honours is a knighthood for Mr. Bancroft. He has more than earned it, from whatever point of view he may be regarded. Aided by his brilliant and gracious wife, the Marie Wilton so pointedly eulogised by Dickens, he effected a reformation of the English stage, at the same time rising to individual distinction as an actor. All our readers, we may be sure, will join us in tendering hearty congratulations to Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft, not merely on their social elevation, but as having helped in no small degree to dispel the antiquated prejudice dealt with in our principal article this month. What we have termed "the progress of the players" is becoming very marked, though knighthoods have not yet been conferred upon Mr. Wyndham, Mr. Tree, Mr. Hare, and Mr. Willard.

There is no foundation, we understand, for the report that Sir Henry Irving and Miss Terry are about to appear on the stage in Paris.

Mr. Tree has in rehearsal a new adaptation, this time by Mr. Sydney Grundy, of *Mlle. de Belle-Isle*, which is to be produced in a few days. In the autumn he goes on a provincial tour, his theatre meanwhile being given up to grand English opera. Besides *Chemineau*, he has secured the English rights of *Le Passe*, in which Mme. Bernhardt will appear at the Renaissance before long. The great French actress's part will be played by Mrs. Tree.

Mr. Wilson Barrett ended his season at the Lyric on May 29, playing Othello with unusual effect. He returns in August, probably to revive *The Sign of the Cross* and *The Silver King*. He has also a new play in hand.

Mr. Willard, after a successful tour in America, has returned to London, but will recross the Atlantic in the autumn to produce *The Physician*. *The Rogue's Comedy*, a comparative failure here, has been well received in the United States.

Are Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, having amassed a large fortune, about to retire from the stage, as rumour says? At any rate, they have made arrangements for an autumn tour.

Drury Lane Theatre is now a limited company with a capital of £125,000 in £1 shares, with Mr. Arthur Collins as managing director.

Mr. Alexander closes the St. James's on June 30, and after a brief holiday will go on his provincial tour. He produces Mr. Carton's new play, *The Tree of Knowledge*, on his return.

The estate of the late Sir Augustus Harris has been valued at £97,000.

Miss Ada Rehan, with Mr. and Mrs. Augustin Daly, has arrived in

London, and will open a tour at Newcastle on July 5. In August she appears at the Grand Theatre, Islington.

Mme. Melba opens the season of Mr. Damrosch's opera company in Philadelphia next November, afterwards going to New York, Boston, and other parts of America.

Madame Rejane appears at the Lyric on June 28, and will be followed by Mme. Odillon in a course of German plays.

Signor Nicolini has been seriously ill—so ill, in fact, that his wife left the Continent for Wales to attend him.

Signor Zacconi, the Italian tragedian, has had a marked success in Germany, and will probably appear in London before long. He is spoken of by the German Press as another Salvini, and his principal supporter, Signora Varini, as worthy of the position she occupies. Signor Zacconi is at his best in Dr. Ibsen's *Ghosts*, which, however, is not likely to be passed by the Examiner of Plays here.

An Irish Gentleman having been withdrawn, Mr. Penley may be expected to produce, and appear in, *The Silver Spoon*, a three-act farce by Mr. Frank Lindo. "For Heaven's sake," the actor is reported to have said to the author, "don't put me in skirts. I'll be an uncle if you like, but never an aunt again!"

Macaulay well remarks that those who do not take the pains to break the shell of history will never get at the kernel. Mr. George Bernard Shaw, happily possessed of a mind high enough to enable him to look down with serene contempt upon Shakspere, is not in the mood, of course, to trouble himself about matters of hard fact. Making another attack upon the Lyceum, he tells us that the production of *Charles I.* followed the great revival of *Hamlet* there. The reverse was the case, the interval between the two events being about two years (1872-74). How far can we trust a dramatic critic who falls into such an egregious blunder as this? *Charles I.*, with *Richelieu* after it, paved the way for *Hamlet* at the Lyceum. Mr. Shaw scarcely improves as he goes on. The success of Mr. Irving's "Digby Grand" (*sic*) ought, it seems, to have led him on to Ibsen, or at least to deal with some "fundamentally serious social problem." This is rather vague, as much of Mr. Shaw's writing usually is.

Mr. Oakey Hall, an American critic popular among Englishmen, contributes to the New York *Dramatic Mirror* an article upon stage impersonation—in other words, the ability of a player completely to sink his individuality in a character. How few, he says, of the dramatic profession change or merge their individuality beyond perfection of make-up in hair, face, figure, and style of dress! For illustrations we can take traditions of Garrick, Macklin, Kemble, Kean, Talma, the original Booth, and the original Wallack, classing each among impersonators. Not so Charles Kemble, Macready, Charles Kean, Barry Sullivan, and Lester Wallack. These last-named five never entirely got outside of themselves on the stage. "Perhaps," Mr. Hall continues, "Henry Irving may be named as a champion impersonator, sinking in his versatility of performances his individuality of private life, notwithstanding his alleged mannerisms, which I, for one, never could discover. I recall the incident of my taking the late ex-Speaker General James W. Husted, when we were in London together, to an Irving luncheon, and in the evening to the Lyceum, in order to see its manager's impersonation of Louis XI. Most naively and sincerely, Husted, after Irving had been a few minutes on the stage, remarked to me 'Is he who acts the mumbling old fanatical King really the gentleman

with whom we lunched this morning?' To tell the full truth, I could scarcely realise myself the fact that the actor who was embodying the cunning, heartlessness, and intrigue of Louis XI, for which history had made him famous, or rather infamous, was the Henry Irving whom I was honoured in knowing well in private life, so marvellously was his individuality swallowed in the impersonation. To me Irving will always be Charles I., and the Vicar of Wakefield, and even Alfred Jingle, quite as Edwin Forrest will be to me Richelieu and King Lear."

Among impersonators, Mr. Hall includes Mr. E. L. Davenport, Mr. Mansfield, Mr. Beerbohm Tree, Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Stoddart, and Signor Salvini. Impersonations are rarer among actresses. "No woman likes to sink her individuality in her characters of the stage, especially if they are to mar her beauty. It was no task for Charlotte Cushman to merge her mannish face and heavy contralto tones in Meg Merrilies. Yet it was the love of high art that impelled Rose Eytinge to sink her beauty and refinement in Nancy Sikes. Recall, on the other hand, Mary Anderson. Whatever character figured on the programme for her performance, was she ever other than Mary Anderson? Many years of professional career elapsed before Willard became an impersonator; but *The Middleman* fixed his status in that respect. It requires great study and persistent thought to achieve this art of impersonation. What a study of history and portraiture and lore of the seventeenth century, for instance, Irving must have undergone before he made up and presented Charles I.! The same may be alleged of Edwin Booth before he essayed his matchless performance of Bertucchio in Tom Taylor's *Fool's Revenge*, taken from Hugo's *Le Roi s'Amuse*."

The importance of music as an aid to theatrical effect has never been so conclusively shown as it is at the Lyceum. Most of us remember what was composed for *Macbeth* by Sir Alexander Mackenzie, principal of the Royal Academy of Music, and by Mr. Edward German for *Henry VIII.* Consequently, Sir Henry Irving was well placed as the chairman of the latest yearly festival of the Royal Society of Musicians, which took place at the Hôtel Métropole on May 27. In proposing the toast of the evening, he said that he could not help wondering apprehensively what musicians thought sometimes of the place allotted to music in the drama. The technical term, he believed, for that position was "incidental." He could, however, assure them that there was a very cordial esteem in the theatre for the orchestra, even when the latter were labouring, like the perturbed spirit of Hamlet's father, underground. Many plays at the Lyceum had been improved by the power of music, which he had gratefully acknowledged during his management by securing the co-operation of many of our most gifted composers. They would now understand the mixed feelings of the actor who came to plead for the cause which had brought them together. There it was not the music that was "incidental," and he brought them an apologetic greeting from a sympathetic but extraneous art.

Yet another French writer is able to see that England has a great theatre. Inspired by M. Filon's book, M. Henri de Curzon contributes to *La Revue Hebdomadaire* an article on Sir Henry Irving. "The history of an actor," he says, "is often that of the stage itself, when this actor, by his brilliant intelligence, his unequalled talent, his exceptional authority, has directly influenced, not only the position of the theatre and its interpreters, but the dramatic productions of his time and the taste of the

public. Such was the position of Lekain and Talma. Such to-day is the position of Henry Irving, who is so firmly established in public opinion that he forms part of English greatness, and no one was surprised when, in 1895, a royal edict crowned his noble career with the title of 'Sir.'" Elsewhere M. de Curzon speaks of "cette grande figure de l'art dramatique."

Sir Edward Lawson's appreciation of the Drama has always been so keen that no ordinary sympathy has been extended to him in theatrical circles on the death of his wife, which occurred late in May. She was the only daughter of Benjamin Webster, in some respects the most remarkable comedian this century has produced. She was buried at Beaconsfield, the wreath-senders including the Prince of Wales, Sir Henry Irving, Mr. Toole, Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, Mr. Tree, and Mr. and Mrs. Kendal.

The Augustus Harris Memorial committee have sent £1000 to Charing Cross Hospital to provide a bed for the dramatic, musical, and music-hall professions. The rest of the fund will be expended on a bust to be placed in Drury Lane Theatre, the sculptor being Mr. Sidney R. J. Smith.

Mr. Archer has reprinted his criticisms on the theatrical work of 1896, repeating his plea for an endowed theatre. On this subject, Mr. J. F. Nisbet spoke in this magazine last month in reply to Sir Edward Russell, who has a rejoinder to him in our present issue. The discussion is one of interest, even if it should lead to no practical results.

The last of Mr. Bancroft's readings of the *Christmas Carol* this season was given at the Imperial Institute on June 3, this time in aid of the Colonial Nurses Fund, which it aided to the extent of £250. Lord Loch took the chair, and the vote of thanks to the reader was seconded by the Bishop of Mauritius.

In Mr. C. J. Phipps, who died at his residence in Mecklenburgh-square on May 25, we lose the most eminent theatrical architect of our time. He was sixty years of age, but looked much younger. He built no fewer than seventy theatres, including the old Queen's in Long Acre, the Gaiety, the Strand, the new Princess's, the Savoy, the Lyric, and, above all, Her Majesty's as it now is. Mr. Phipps, who came from Bath, will undoubtedly be remembered in the history of theatrical architecture.

The utterly erroneous idea that a prejudice exists in this country against theatrical wares from abroad continues to find expression at intervals in New York. "The history of success and failure of American actors and dramatic ventures in London and in Great Britain at large," says the usually well-informed *Mirror*, *apropos* of the warm greeting extended at the Adelphi to *Secret Service*, "would furnish strange matter for thought. Players and plays deservedly successful at home have gone abroad to fail; while so-called actors in crude and exaggerated dramas, after failure here, have found fame and fortune in England. It is but just, however, to say that the histrionic mediocrities and the theatrical eccentricities, American born, that have won their way abroad, have found favour in provincial places, where an American is apparently still thought to be a person aggressively equipped like an arsenal, grotesque in attire, and with a speech unlike anything else among classified tongues." Reading all this, we can only wonder whether the writer has ever been amongst us. For the rest, we are always ready to welcome such artists as Mr. Jefferson and Miss Ada Rehan, but not to surrender our right to show what we dislike.

It is not generally known that the late Mr. Barney Barnato, the million-

aire, showed in early life a strong taste for the stage. In conjunction with an elder brother, he got up theatrical entertainments in South Africa soon after his arrival there, appearing as Claude Melnotte in *The Lady of Lyons*, Jacob M'Closkey in Dion Boucicault's *Octoroon*, and Mathias in *The Bells*. He was also seen at St. George's Hall, London, in an amateur performance for the benefit of one of the Jewish charities in which he manifested so lively and practical an interest.

The Examiner of Plays, who last autumn passed *His Little Dodge*, would seem to have a higher sense of his responsibility than before, possibly as a result of our article towards the end of last year, on "Nastiness on the Stage." He refused to allow Mme. Jane May to play *Le Fiacre 117*, lately revived at the Théâtre Cluny.

Mr. Clement Scott is an attractive personality, even to those who dissent the most from him in particular opinions. No one interested in theatrical work should miss the admirable "interview" with him that Mr. G. S. Edwards contributed to the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* of June 5. Like many of his brethren, Mr. Scott complains in effect that players in general are not remarkable for gratitude, are too much disposed to take praise as a matter of course. "A critic," he says, "may persistently and conscientiously praise an actor's work for years, but at the first sound of censure the man or woman whose fortunes he has assisted, and whose position he has helped to establish, will turn and rend him. People—professional people—forget praise, they never forget blame. After having done one's duty to the public for thirty-five years it is certainly hard to be rewarded by hisses and cat-calls, and it is harder still to have to say that for one nice letter from an unknown friend and reader one receives fifty abusive anonymous epistles."

Mme. Calvé, who, after a remunerative concert tour, left New York for Europe last month, will appear at the Paris Opéra Comique next autumn, in M. Massenet's latest opera, *Sapho*, the libretto of which has been derived by M. Henri Cain from M. Daudet's well-known novel. The work is described as a modern problem play set to music. Mme. Calvé is more than pleased with her rôle, "the most interesting," she says, "I have yet studied."

Mme. Bernhardt, however lavish elsewhere, is not improvident in the arrangement of her theatre. It seems that a large number of the *jeunesse dorée* esteem it a high honour to be near her, and are willing to pay well for the privilege of appearing as supers in her productions. This has been done for some time, and the captain of the supers has been accumulating a small fortune from the tributes of the actress's admirers. She heard of the amount of money paid by the young men for the honour of being supers, and speedily issued an order that in the future all applicants for positions in the mob shall appeal to her personally.

M. Worms is about to leave the Comédie Française, but will remain there to direct the rehearsal in September of *Tristan de Lemois*, by M. Armand Silvestre, which will probably be given early in October.

Signora Duse, whose success in Paris we have already recorded, declares that she "detests journalists." Formerly, when less famous, she showed a different feeling towards them, even to the extent of allowing herself to be interviewed again and again. The experience of several dramatic critics forbids them to feel any surprise at this change.

At the République has appeared *Le Bâtard Rouge*, by MM. Rodolphe

Bringer and Gaston Renan, both new names to us. This drama of five acts is a *réchauffée* of Dumas' *Three Musketeers*. It has very little originality, but it is full of amusing incidents, and was warmly applauded. Cardinal Richelieu himself is one of the *dramatis personæ*.

M. Brunetiere, of the French Academy, lately returned to Paris after a lecturing tour of America. His chief discourse was one on the drama. For two centuries and a-half, he said, France had been pre-eminent for her plays, most of which, however, could be forgotten without loss. He took no pride in operetta of the Labiche and Offenbach school, and the plays of the elder Dumas and Scribe had nothing but historical value. In some respects their influence was decidedly bad, as they were made to depend in the main on intricate plots and elaborate situations rather than on true pictures of life. Dumas *fils*, Augier, and Sardou led the revolt against the unnatural school of Dumas *père* and Scribe. The first of the three was a moralist and a reformer. Augier had been much overrated ; his ideas were not original, he had no literary style, his work savoured of the vulgar. M. Sardou had a brilliant and forceful style, but was too fond of the spectacular, and fell into the mistake of writing a play round the personality of an actress. All three erred in placing construction above truth and literary merit.

M. Brunetiere is described by the *Mirror* as a short, gruff-looking man, brusque in manner and concise in speech. He does not speak a word of English, and it was Madame Brunetière who, with frantic gestures, attempted to order their baggage to be put on board, while M. Brunetière stood haughtily by and surveyed the people hurrying to the ship with fine "literary" contempt. M. Brunetière is the high apostle and the recognised master of the objective school of criticism, the avowed literary adversary of M. Anatole France and M. Jules Lemaitre.

Mlle. Yvette Guilbert was married last month to Mr. Schiller, an American chemist.

M. Jules Caze's *La Vassale* is expected to appear towards the end of June at the Comédie Française, where it was received some months ago.

M. Richepin's *Martyre*, contrary to report, is not to be withdrawn at the Comédie Française. It will be produced early next year, with M. Mounet-Sully in the principal part.

The committee of the Comédie Française has admitted three new plays *à lecture : Richemont*, in three acts, by M. Gaston Schefer ; *La Joie de Mourir*, in two acts, by M. André de Lorde ; and *Amour de Poëte*, in five acts, by M. Grandmougin.

Signor Tamagno was a great success in Paris ; everywhere he was fêted, and the Italian Embassy gave a dinner in his honour. In New York, as he has been heard to complain, he was treated very differently, probably because he chose to bury himself in obscurity. He was certainly very careful in his expenditure. If rumour be true, he even did his own washing at the small foreigners' hotel in which he lived.

Some of the Paris managers are going to try and improve the quality of "curtain-raisers," that is to say, they will endeavour to get hold of better pieces than those with which the evening's entertainment generally begins at present. Would that some London managers would see the wisdom of doing the same thing. It is strange, to take only one instance, that so capital a dialogue as Mr. I. Zangwill's *Threepenny Bits*, first produced at a charity *matinée* about two years ago, and played at another performance of the

same kind by Miss Mabel Terry Lewis and Mr. Ben Webster, should not have been eagerly snapped up and put on in front of some piece in an evening bill.

Frau Wolter, who has been described as the Rachel of Germany, died on June 14 in Vienna, at the age of sixty-three. Of poor parentage, she took to the stage in her youth, and, after undergoing many vicissitudes, became the principal attraction in the Austro-Hungarian capital. Her greatest successes were as Lady Macbeth, Adrienne Lecouvreur, and Marie Stuart. About twenty-five years ago she married a Belgian count, who died in 1888. Her funeral was attended by Prince von Liechstenstein, the Court Chamberlain, Baron von Bezecny, and the burgomaster. In compliance with her own request she was buried in the white dress, embroidered with gold, which she had worn as Iphigenia.

Herr Sudermann is dramatising his novel, *Der Katzensteg*, for the Lessing Theatre, Berlin, where it may appear at the beginning of next season.

Signor Tamagno has returned from Paris to Milan.

Signor Verdi, who is eighty-three years of age, lately asked permission to erect two tombs in the garden of his villa at St. Agatha, one for his wife, the other for himself. "Per Bacco!" he exclaimed after a long walk taken for the purpose, "I feel a little tired. I am getting old! The beginning of the next century is too far off for me to see."

Not long ago Signor Verdi was present at a performance given in his honour at Geneva. He is slightly deaf, but heard quite well by holding his hands to his ears. Of Madame Caron, the French prima donna, who lately sang Desdemona in Paris to Signor Tamagno's Othello, he has a high opinion. "What an artist she is!" he says; "what a singer! what an actress!" Signor Verdi feels Brahms' death immensely. He considers Boito the best of all Italian composers, but regrets his unreadiness to work. Speaking of Boito's *Verone*, Signor Verdi says that the libretto is something stupendous. "But," he adds, "he is too severe with himself. He renounces at times the loveliest melodies because he fancies he discovers some little flaw in them. If we were all to be as particular as that, we should have to destroy every page of music yet written!" Signor Verdi does not praise the execution of operatic music in Italy. "They do not rehearse enough," he says, "and the artists are not well chosen. The chorus also shouts instead of sings."

Mr. Louis Nethersole, Miss Nethersole's brother, has made arrangements with Mr. Robert Pateman for the production of popular American plays in London and the English provinces. He believes that there is a rich field here for American melodramas, provided that they are suitable for Anglicization as to place and character.

Mr. J. E. Dodson, who sails for England at the end of June, has secured the entire rights of a new comedy by Mr. Charles Coghlan, *Dr. Quixote*.

Mr. Charles Coghlan, accompanied by his wife and daughter, has gone to his place on Prince Edward's Island for a little trout-fishing. Later, when she has fully recovered from the effects of a recent surgical operation, his sister, Miss Rose Coghlan, will go there too. He is expected to come to London this summer for a brief visit, during which he will complete the comedy he is writing for Mr. Hare. Mr. Beerbohm Tree wanted Mr. Coghlan to play Mark Antony in the projected revival of *Julius Cæsar* at Her Majesty's Theatre.

Mr. Bassett Roe left New York for London at the end of May, but will return in the autumn as Miss Julia Marlowe's chief coadjutor.

THE THEATRE.

AUGUST, 1897.

Our Watch Tower.

SIR SQUIRE AND LADY BANCROFT.

THE knighthood conferred upon Mr. Bancroft has been received with universal approbation. It came, no doubt, as a surprise to many, for Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft are already historical personages, and, although they have made a few stage appearances since they retired from the management of the Haymarket, they are not generally regarded as among "active" members of the profession. No doubt the occasion for bestowing a title upon Mr. Bancroft at this moment was found in the disinterested efforts he has been making of late to swell the coffers of many charitable institutions. His readings of *The Christmas Carol* have brought in large sums of money, which he has generously handed over to hospitals and other philanthropic establishments. There can be no doubt, however, that the honour is mainly retrospective in its origin and scope. It is intended for the actor-manager who, with his wife as loyal and valuable assistant, was enabled to work great and salutary reforms in matters connected with the English stage.

We have spoken of Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft as "already historical." They were hard at work in our midst, appearing nightly before the public, so lately as 1893, but it was as long ago as 1865 that Mrs. Bancroft (then Miss Wilton) began that lesseeship of the old Prince of Wales's Theatre which was destined to have so far-reaching an influence on the English theatre. It was in 1865 that the first of the Robertson comedies was produced by Miss Wilton, who did not become Mrs. Bancroft until three years afterwards. It is more than thirty years since Mrs. Bancroft introduced to our stage the Robertsonian method, both in drama and in acting. That, perhaps, is the Bancrofts' chief title to honour—that they recognized the value of that method and encouraged Robertson to persevere in it. Though trained in the older traditions of the boards, they had the acuteness to see the charm of the Robertson comedy and of the style of acting which befitted it. They stepped at once and

with ease from the machine-made burlesques and dramas of H. J. Byron into the slight, simple, and eminently natural creations of the author of *Caste*. While to Robertson is due the credit of conceiving and creating natural, as opposed to artificial, English comedy, to the Bancrofts is due the credit, hardly less great in its way, of rising at once to the level of that conception and creation. They not only encouraged Robertson—accepting from him in succession *Society*, *Ours*, *Caste*, *Play*, *School*, and *M.P.*—but interpreted him, thereby founding an entirely new school of comedy-acting. They secured, and wisely retained as long as they could, the services of Mr. John Hare, who has proved himself, both as actor and as manager, a worthy follower in their footsteps.

At the Haymarket, of course, the Bancrofts did not make so distinct a mark as they had made at the Prince of Wales's. They were at the latter theatre for fourteen years, during which they employed the pens, not only of Byron and of Robertson, but of Boucicault in *How She Loves Him*, of Edmund Yates in *Tame Cats*, of Wilkie Collins in *Man and Wife*, of Mr. Gilbert in *Sweethearts*. It was there that they began, in *Peril* and *Diplomacy*, the process of adapting Sardou to the English boards. It was there that they gave the first of the modern revivals of *The School for Scandal*. It was there, as we all remember, that they sought to apply the modern method to *The Merchant of Venice*, incidentally bestowing upon us the benefaction of the Portia of Miss Ellen Terry. But, of course, they did much more than that. In addition to founding a new school of acting, in which they were themselves the foremost teachers, they founded a new school of stage-management, or, at any rate, a school of stage-management which was virtually new, for the traditions of the Vestris-Mathews system of "production," so notable for finish and completeness, had practically vanished. It was reserved for Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft to make completeness and finish once more the characteristics of English comedy-production. The Vestris-Mathews system had erred on the side of unnecessary extravagance. The Bancrofts did not seek to gild refined gold. They aimed simply at propriety and polish. It is true that the expense thus thrown upon them compelled them to institute—in 1874, when they produced *The School for Scandal*—the ten-shilling stall, now universal in the west-end of London; but one cannot have elegance and refinement in stage presentation without paying for those luxuries.

Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft produced at the Haymarket only one abso-

lutely new work—the *Lords and Commons* of Mr. Pinero. They revived, however, *The Rivals*, *The Overland Route*, and *Plot and Passion*, and they put forward two more adaptations of Sardou —*Odette* and *Fédora:* not at all a bad record for the four or five years of their stay at this theatre. It should, and will, be accounted to them for righteousness that throughout their career as managers they never produced a piece simply because it gave them opportunities for display as actors. They did more than establish a dramatic seminary in which the natural style was exemplified as well as taught; they sought out, and gave chances to, histrionic ability wherever it was to be found. We have already mentioned the names of Mr. Hare and Miss Terry. At the Prince of Wales's, the Bancrofts had at different times the assistance of Fanny Josephs, "Johnny" Clarke, Miss Hughes (Mrs. Gaston Murray), Miss Larkin, George Honey, Miss Lydia Foote, Mr. Blakeley, H. J. Montague, Mrs. Leigh Murray, Mr. William Terriss (in a revival of *Society*), Mr. Charles Collette, Miss Carlotta Addison, Mr. Coghlan, Miss Le Thière, Mr. Frank Archer, Mr. Lin Rayne, Mr. Arthur Wood, E. H. Brooke, Mr. Flockton, Miss Carlisle, Arthur Cecil, Mr. Neville, Mr. Sugden, Miss Kate Phillips, John Clayton, Mr. H. B. Conway, Mr. Forbes Robertson, and so forth. When *Money* was revived Miss Fanny Brough, and afterwards Miss Ellen Terry, were invited to play Clara to the Georgina of Mrs. Bancroft, who always was willing to cede to another the dignity of "leading lady." When *Peril* was produced Mr. and Mrs. Kendal played Dr. Thornton and Lady Ormond, Mrs. Bancroft not being in the cast at all. From the cast of *Duty* Mrs. Bancroft was also absent, the leading female parts being taken by Mrs. Vezin, Mrs. John Wood, Miss Marion Terry, and Miss Linda Dietz.

The tale might be carried further, but that is unnecessary. Skilful and delightful as actors, Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft were, as managers, as near perfection as human nature can go. It is a happy circumstance that the honour conferred upon Sir Squire carries with it a title for his wife, from whom, in considering his services to the stage, it is impossible to dissociate him. Thus are the merits of both recognised and rewarded. The distinction may seem tardy, and even belated; but it is not really so. It comes at a time when public opinion is ripe for it. The overwhelming claims of Henry Irving having been acknowledged by Crown and Government, a precedent has been created, in the light of which nothing seems more appropriate than that the historic services of the Bancrofts should be recognised also.

Portraits.

MISS JULIA ARTHUR.

ANYBODY or anything that can lay claim to Canadian origin is sure of a warm place in the hearts of Englishmen in this year of grace. So great, indeed, is the "Canadian boom," as some have called it, that, even if Miss Julia Arthur had not already won applause on account of her talents, she might almost rely upon being made a favourite with playgoers on the sole ground that she is by birth a native of that fair and wide Dominion which Mr. Kipling in his stirring verses apostrophised as "Our Lady of the Snows." Miss Arthur, though little known in this country until a few years ago, when she joined Sir Henry Irving, has had a fairly long career in America, and one that included many successes. Indeed, she was a great favourite in the United States before she was introduced to the English public at all. Since she has been on this side of the Atlantic, she has been gradually making her way into a similar popularity, and she has certainly justified the high opinion Sir Henry Irving formed of her capacity before he paid her the compliment of inviting her to become a member of the Lyceum company. Miss Arthur began to act as an amateur before she was in her teens, and by the time she had reached Juliet's age she was already quite an experienced player. At sixteen, in fact, she had been on tour for three years, and had been entrusted with a large number of rôles in the Shaksperean and in what is known as the "classic" drama. After that she turned her ripening talents to account in modern plays, and scored her principal triumphs as Letty in *Saints and Sinners*, as Jeanne in *A Village Priest*, and as Lady Windermere in *Lady Windermere's Fan*. She also created a great impression when she took the title-part in Mr. T. Bailey Aldrich's drama *Mercedes*, a part in which she may, perhaps, be seen some day in London. With Sir Henry Irving she has played Imogen, Hero, Rosamund in *Becket*, Lady Anne in *Richard III.*, and one of the "wicked sisters" (the old phrase which recalls Cinderella rises naturally to the lips in this connection) in *Madame Sans-Gêne*. Her Lady Anne was a charming performance, as soon as the nervousness which at first affected the young actress had worn off; and her share in that magnificent opening scene in which Sir Henry Irving has some of his finest moments lost nothing of its effectiveness in Miss Arthur's hands.

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MISS JULIA ARTHUR.

The Round Table.

A STRANGE STORY.

By M.

MANY years ago, just after taking my degree at Oxford, I settled in some gloomy chambers near Holborn to read for the Bar. Law was not wholly to my taste, but I preferred it to any of the professions which my friends counselled me to adopt. As an agnostic by sincere conviction, I could not, at all events, think of going in for the Church.

Before long, as a means of relieving the tedium of my daily life, but liking to be at home more than anywhere else, I entered upon what was to become a tolerably systematic and comprehensive study of old French literature. Perhaps I may have had a vague wish to make myself an authority in print on the subject. I had inherited a little library in this way, and had added to it at times out of my slender resources. Curled up in an armchair night after night, I became acquainted, by the end of about two years, with every monumental work, from the chivalric *Chansons de Geste* to the mass of literature but for which the Great Revolution would never have come about. Montaigne, Rabelais, Pascal, Corneille, Molière, Racine, Boileau, Bossuet, Fénélon, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Diderot, Helvétius, Raynal, Beaumarchais,—these and others soon captivated my fancy, especially as I read their writings in conjunction with the records, often inadequate, of their lives.

In spite of a leaning towards eighteenth-century philosophy, so pointedly shown in the *Encyclopédie*, no personality impressed itself so deeply on my mind as that of Pierre Corneille. His career presented to me a psychological problem which none of his biographers had noticed, and which excited my curiosity in no ordinary degree. His fine genius as a tragic dramatist, exercised with the happiest results in his early manhood, cannot

be said to have lasted more than six years, though he lived to be seventy-eight. Going to Paris as a young *avocat* from Rouen, his birthplace, he devoted his energies almost exclusively to the theatre, and in 1636, at the age of thirty, achieved a splendid success as the author of *Le Cid* (suggested to him by Guillen de Castro's play on the subject). Richelieu, himself covetous of distinction as a dramatist, employed the influence of the Academy to decry it, but to no purpose. In the words of Boileau, "Tout Paris eut pour Chimène," the heroine, "les yeux de Rodrigue," the hero. Before this time the French drama had been in a chaotic state; it had no form, and darkness was on the face of the deep. *Le Cid*, if not without strongly marked limitations in sympathy, rectified all this; and three other plays from the same pen—*Horace*, *Cinna*, and *Polyeucte*—the last of which appeared in 1640—made him saluted as *le créateur de l'art dramatique en France*. By *Le Menteur*, adapted from the play by Francisco de Roxas, he did a similar service to comedy. Young Molière, soon to be "the Shakspere of France," long afterwards avowed, with characteristic frankness, that the piece had "fixed his ideas" in this way. Suddenly, however, Corneille's hand lost its cunning. He wrote play after play, but only to meet with more or less disheartening rebuffs. For a brief period he abandoned the "loathed stage" altogether, In a state of abject poverty, bereft of nearly all household gods, and comparatively forgotten except by a discerning few, he passed away in 1684. How could we explain so abrupt a collapse of great intellectual power in one well on the right side of forty?

One afternoon, as I was musing over this question, a happy thought occurred to me. Not far from London, in a rather lonely village hard by the Great Northern Railway, there stood a noble ivy-covered Tudor house, slightly modernized, but still retaining, in all important respects, its original features. I had spent many days there in my teens, its prospective and now absolute owner, whom I will call Frank Trefusis, having been one of my best college friends. Not that we had much in common: he thought of nothing but field sports; I was a somewhat ascetic student. For all the things I loved—poetry, history, philosophy, and the rest—he felt and expressed the most robust contempt. "Bah," he would say, "what is all learning in comparison with a gallop across country? Is there any music so good as the distant barking of dogs at night? Why do you bury yourself alive so much? No London for me: confound books!" Notwithstanding, or perhaps by reason of, such difference of

tastes, we remained firmly attached to each other. There was no mistaking the genuineness of that speech of his: "Always delighted to see you, old boy; come whenever you like; I'm nearly always here." His want of sympathy with literature, however, did not lead him to part with a library which the family had accumulated from generation to generation, and which would have made the mouth of a Bernard Quaritch water. It was particularly rich in seventeenth-century books, and had, besides, a mass of correspondence, carefully arranged and bound, of the same period. If tradition was not at fault, both Corneille and Molière were guests in this old house at different times, a Trefusis having become acquainted with them in Paris. Might not that correspondence throw light upon the enigma that was puzzling me?

In about an hour and a half, with a small portmanteau in my hand, I arrived at my friend's ancestral home, intending to stop there over-night.

In the carriage-drive I came upon the major-domo of the establishment, Gabriel Evans, now, alas! dead. He was at once butler, coachman, cook, and I know not what else. An excellent servant of the old type—illiterate, it must be confessed, but honest, warm-hearted, industrious, and wholly loyal to those whose bread he ate. I remembered him well, especially as in the old days he would insist upon giving me nice things.

He was gardening on his knees.

"Gabriel," I said, putting out my hand, "you have not forgotten me, perhaps?"

"Bless me," he said, throwing down a trowel and rising, "if it isn't Mr. M——. Glad to see you, sir! Why, it must be quite three years since you were here. Hope I find you well, sir."

My looks did not pity me.

"Is Mr. Trefusis in?" I asked.

"No, sir; away up north, banging away at them 'ere grouse. Had a brace from him this morning. Won't be back for two or three weeks. You'll have a bit of dinner, sir?"

I would.

"Martha!" he shouted.

Out came Martha, otherwise Mrs. Gabriel, the housekeeper, who was equally glad and surprised to see me.

Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig, as drawn for Dickens's *Christmas Carol* by his artist, seemed to be standing before me—old-fashioned, genial, ready to please.

"Mr. M——," said Gabriel, "will have something to eat;—away!"

Half an hour later I was enjoying one of the best of dishes, a perfect chop perfectly cooked, in the dining room, which, with its dark oak panelling, dotted with heads in faded gold of famous cavaliers, seemed to be full of echoes from the past.

Gabriel hovered about me with a sort of affectionate solicitude.

"What will you drink, sir?" he asked. "There is well-nigh every sort of wine in the cellar."

Good Trefusis, at once generous and self-indulgent!

"Nothing but some soda-water," I replied; "I am a teetotaler, not by pledge, but by taste."

He pleaded the virtues of several wines below—notably Clos Vougeot—but without effect.

"Gabriel," I said, after an excellent dessert, when the shades of night were closing in, "you can do me a favour. I should like to spend a few hours in the library to-night. More particularly do I want to look through the manuscript letters bound up in white vellum. May I stay here until to-morrow?"

"Cert'nly, sir," was the reply. "Mr. Trefusis would be very angry with me if I said no. Always a bookworm, you, sir—always wanting to sit up at night to read! You shall have your old room; you'll know your way to it. As luck would have it, the library has only just been put to rights. All the books are as they was afore. Wish *I* was a learned man! Martha!"—he went to the door—"here! Mr. M—— will stop here to-night. He is going to have a rummage among the books. Light up there! Let Jane get his old room ready. You'll have a bit of fire, sir? I thought so; it *is* a trifle chilly. I'll bring you some soda and biscuits."

My after-dinner cigar smoked, I sauntered into the library, which was lighted from the roof and at the sides. Gabriel followed me with two massive candelabra, which he placed on an antique reading table.

"You won't be disturbed," he said; "we all go to bed early when the guv'nor is away. Good-night, sir."

"Good-night, Gabriel; thank you very much."

How delighted I was to be in that library again! To me it was rich in memories of a hundred delvings into the past. I loved it in every way—loved it, in the main, for its many shelves of rare books, but also for its finely painted ceiling, its Parthenon frieze, its high wainscoting (visible here and there), its portraits

of men who had made their mark, its suits of armour worn during the Civil War, and last, but not least, a superb carved oak mantelpiece, with triumphs of Worcestershire china, in the stove under which a few logs were burning a fierce and a brilliant blue.

After a glance at the books, in many of which I renewed old acquaintances, I lighted upon the correspondence that had been bound up in white vellum. I placed it with a keen sense of enjoyment between the lights on the table, and was soon absorbed in its contents. Nothing, I am sure, could have interested me in a greater degree. Here were letters to that Trefusis of yore from some of the most illustrious Frenchmen of the seventeenth century—Corneille, Voiture, Molière, Pascal, Descartes, Boileau, St. Evremond. Even Madame de Rambouillet, the founder and patron of *précocité*, was represented. Collectively, the letters presented a really striking picture of French life at the time. Why, therefore, had they not been printed? Because their original possessor, Raymond Trefusis, had left a strict injunction that they should be seen by private friends of the family only.

Four or five hours passed away; a little Louis Quinze clock told me that I ought to be asleep, and I threw open the casement for a breath of fresh air. It was a beautiful autumn night; the moon was at its full, and it lighted up a dense mass of foliage, a sort of miniature forest, from the midst of which the tower of a grand old church, the last resting-place of many a bygone Trefusis, rose with the most picturesque effect. "All the air a solemn stillness held;" not even the rustling of a leaf could be heard; I was irresistibly reminded of the terrible calm which fell upon the Greek host at Aulis. Not feeling sleepy, I lit a cigar, leant out of the window, and gave myself up to a full enjoyment of the scene.

Presently—how I am unable to explain—a feeling stole over me that I was *not alone in the room*. Who could it be? Gabriel and his wife and the other servants were all sound asleep, no doubt. I am not deficient in courage, as many an old college friend could assure you; but I am free to confess that a sort of tremor took possession of me. Half ashamed of this, I turned abruptly round.

What I saw might have unnerved one much stronger than I can pretend to be. In a high-backed chair at the side of the table, on which a volume of the manuscript correspondence still lay open, sat a Figure not to be mistaken for anyone but that of Pierre Corneille. Yes, there he was as portrayed to us in later life, with his long grizzly hair, his massive countenance, his finely-

chiselled lips, his luminous and penetrating dark eyes. He wore a small silk cap, and his doublet, surmounted by the large white collar of the period, was half-concealed by an ample cloak. Through this shadowy Figure, on which the half-shaded light of the candles fell with weird effect, the back of the chair, elaborately ornamented, was distinctly visible.

Regaining my self-possession, I took a seat at the window, threw away my cigar, and prepared myself for what might happen.

For a minute or two the Figure looked at me most intently, as I, of course, did at him. Then the tones of a subdued and rather sepulchral voice came upon my ear. He spoke in simple, unaffected, unrhetorical French, without any attempt to startle me by such magnificent lines as are to be found in his work at its best. I do not remember all his words; but as to their general purport I am not in the slightest doubt. Nothing impressed me so much as the fact that, unlike everybody else, he knew what had been passing in my mind about him.

"In one way," he said, placing a white, blue-veined hand upon the correspondence, "I am an inhabitant of this house, although about two centuries have passed since I was put in the grave. My affections are divided between it and my old home at Rouen; I haunt both. I was an honoured guest here many times; here I spent some of the happiest hours of my life. On that table I wrote a large part of my translation of the *Imitation of Christ*. Molière, the best of men as well as the best of comic dramatists, once joined us for two or three weeks, together with some of his fellow players. Let me thank you for the close and sympathetic study you have given to my writings, so little known in England, so seldom acted in France. You would know the secret of my life, the reason why I failed, long ere old age came upon me, to rise to the level of former achievements? I will tell you.

"My early life, as you know, was passed at my birthplace, Rouen, almost under the shadow of the great cathedral. Only to-day I was in the market-place there, hard by the spot on which Jeanne Darc met her cruel fate. I was educated for the law, but soon deserted it for poetry. At this time I met Mlle. Milet, who gave her heart to me in preference to an accepted lover, and whom I fancied that I loved in return. We plighted our troth where the statue to me has so long been erected. I see her now—radiant with youth, high-spirited, impulsive, and of a type of beauty rather Spanish than French. Confident in myself, ambitious, I anticipated a brilliant future with her as my wife. On her side, she entered fully into my hopes and aspirations, and

during our many walks in and about the ancient city we built up innumerable air-castles together. Our lives seemed to have become one. It was under her eyes, so to speak, that I wrote my first seven plays, the first being *Mélite*, founded upon the romantic incident I have mentioned, and the last *Le Cid*, in which, at her suggestion, I dealt, entirely in my own way, with the human interest of a Spanish tragic comedy mainly intended to be a picture of the dawn of chivalry. I had now discovered my own gifts, the principles upon which they were to be displayed.

"I took up my abode in Paris, there to go from triumph to triumph as a dramatist for four or five years. *Le Cid*, *Horace*, *Cinna*, and *Polyeucte* had a vogue which astonished as much as it delighted me. I found myself regarded as a sort of demi-god; the most exclusive of salons opened their doors to me, and the honours I received were such as a great conqueror might have envied. Though shy, taciturn, and awkward in speech and manner, I was accounted charming, whether at Court, at the Hôtel de Rambouillet, or at the cabaret wherein I used to meet the high-souled Rotrou. Did my splendid success spoil me? I think not. Certain it is, however, that in the whirl of Paris life I forgot Mélite more and more. I soon realised that what I had believed to be a lasting passion for her was nothing but a young fancy. I told her as much in writing, with what pain I can hardly say. My heart had gone out to Marie de Lamperière, daughter of the Lieutenant-General of the Andelys. It was a case of love at first sight between us; but her father, aware that I was poor, sternly objected to our union. One day, utterly downcast, I had to see Richelieu, who, after doing his best or worst to decry *Le Cid*, had held out to me a friendly hand. 'What is the matter with you?' he asked. In reply, I frankly told him the whole truth. 'Is that all?' he said. He rang for a page. 'Is not M. de Lamperière here?' 'Yes, your eminence.' 'Bring him hither.' The obdurate father appeared. Richelieu, as though to show that there is some good in autocratic government, signified a wish that Mlle. de Lamperière should be Mme. Corneille; the official respectfully inclined his head, and so the matter was settled.

"From the time of my marriage to the end of my long life I became increasingly conscious of a sort of blight upon me. The plays which I wrote after those I have named exhibited a continuous waning of power, young as I long remained. Not a few of them proved disastrous failures, and were exposed to ridicule

by small wits. I misinterpreted the taste of the playgoing public; the range of my power narrowed itself with each successive production; a fine thought scarcely ever occurred to me. I could not rise again to such effects as the 'Qu'il mourût!' of the elder Horace, the 'Je crois' of Pauline, or the description by Rodrigue of his victory over the Moors. Presently domestic affliction befell me; my wife died, my son fell at the siege of Graves, my daughter took the veil. Nearly all my household gods were shattered; I often felt tempted to think that I had laboured in vain. But for my brother and his wife—the latter my wife's sister—I should have been left almost alone. Poverty, too, marked 'le grand Corneille' for its own. Owing to family misfortunes, I had nothing to rely upon except a small State pension, irregularly paid. At times, as you have heard, I was well-nigh barefooted.

"I lived, or rather existed, in a dingy garret off the Rue d'Argenteuil, near the present Avenue de l'Opéra. Here I was seized with what I knew would be my last illness. Unannounced, a venerable-looking lady one evening entered the room. In spite of her grey hair and a wrinkled countenance I knew her in an instant to be Mélite, whom I had not seen for nearly half a century. I had crossed from one bank of Cocytus to the other.

"For a few moments we were silent, with our hands tightly clasped together.

"'Pierre,' she at length said, 'they tell me you are fatally ill. I come to crave your forgiveness for a great sin. You wrecked my life; I wished to wreck yours. On the day of your marriage I invoked God's curse upon you with all the bitterness of a broken heart! I prayed that you might lose the genius which I had helped you to develop; might be deprived of all that you loved best, might end your days in abject misery. Alas! I know but too well that those prayers have been answered. Can—can—you forgive me? Oh, do not go out of the world without giving me one more kindly word!'

"She sank down by the side of the bed, buried her face in the poor coverlet, and burst into a passion of tears.

"Looking back upon my past life, I now saw, as by a lightning-flash, why a malignant Fate had pursued me so long.

"'Mélite,'" I said, resting my hand upon her silvered head, 'I have nothing to forgive. Even if I had, there is but too little life left in me for anger. May God bless you! We shall meet again.'

"'God bless you, too,' she murmured, as we kissed each other for the last time.

"I died that night, and was buried with much ceremony in the Church of St. Roch."

For a moment I dropped my eyes. When I raised them again the Figure had disappeared.

I opened a bottle of mineral water, wound up my watch, and, lighting a candle, went to my bed.

The next day I returned to London.

"Why," said a cynical friend to whom I related my experience, "you must have been dreaming!" He has a right to his opinion; I adhere to mine. It is at least noteworthy that what I heard should fit in so completely with the story of Pierre Corneille's career. At any rate, I am no longer an agnostic.

LETTERS TO SOME DRAMATIC CRITICS.

To Clement Scott, Esq.

SIR,—You have done so much for, to use a comprehensive expression, the Stage that I beg to begin by thanking you in the name of all playgoers. The phrase of "the Stage" includes, of course, not only assiduous playgoers, of whom I am one, but also actors, critics, and managers. And when one considers how well you have worked for the best interests of the stage, and notes also that your pen now seems as youthful and fresh as ever, while it has undoubtedly gained in discernment from prolonged practice, it is not the most grateful of tasks to point to flaws, or alleged flaws, in your achievements. But I am nothing if not critical. I will, however, do myself the pleasure of beginning with criticism and ending as you will presently see. I take first the fault most commonly found with you—that you *gush* far too much. As to this, were I holding a brief for your defence I should find little difficulty in my task. I should reply, with what preamble and adornment I might think best fitted to touch judge or jury or both, that you write for a very special as well as for a very large public, and that it would be strange indeed if you and your editor or editors had not long ago found out in what kind of way this public particularly likes their dish of criticism to be served up. I should add that you must of necessity write in the first instance (on the occasion, at least, of certain important productions) literally against time, with a messenger, it may be, waiting in the theatre corridors for instalments of your contribution. I should point out that the seeming lack in a first-night account of any absolutely weighed judgment is due to circumstances beyond your control, and that, therefore, you are not to be called to

account if there is a slip here and there in your evergreen enthusiasm for or against any given conceptions or execution. I should yet further add that you are never slow to correct first impressions (I fancy that you may first have introduced the practice on the daily Press) by a subsequent article in which you have no hesitation in printing that this or that defect has been remedied since the inevitable rush of a first night's performance, with the inevitable stumbling-blocks which you know so well. I should certainly, I venture to imagine, bring you off triumphantly on the counts of "gush" and slip-shod writing.

Where I must feel more diffident is in a matter which, after all, is not of the least consequence to the public to whom you particularly appeal, and of course I should guard against that point were I your counsel for the defence. But, to speak to you frankly, I should not in my innermost mind feel at all easy as to your extraordinary misuse of the language of the neighbouring country of France—a language from which you have adapted many plays to the English stage, and to the requirements of an English audience, with deftness, skill, and a tactful avoidance of pitfalls which might well engulf a less wary and experienced playwright. This avoidance may be said to form part of your constant and laudable desire to keep the English theatre free from the spots which are too often held as marks of merit abroad. Yet, to speak plainly, you do sometimes seem strangely unacquainted with the language in which you have frequently dealt to the profit of others, and, let us hope, of yourself. For instance, you once told an astonished world, in reference to a piece of acting which lacked animation, that a Frenchman had once spoken to you of *ce sacré feu*, which inspires great acting. Now, my very dear Sir, *ce sacré feu* means and can mean only one thing in English. That thing is "This d—d fire," the speaker thereby meaning that the fire in his room is burning or not burning with the malignity peculiarly belonging to fires which behave the worse the more you coax them. What you meant was "*Le feu sacré*." Why, O why? did you not write it? Again, as I pen these lines, my eye falls, not for the first time, on your excellent criticism of *The Silver Key*. Here, again, to my surprise, you quote the well-known exclamation, which is indeed a key-note of the Marquise to the Duc, "*Ingrat*." This, as you justly point out, is a word which carries much in little. Only it is printed in your review "*Ingrate*," which is impossible. This certainly may be, and I hope it is, due to a printer's error; but really you might guard against such errors. Should such a blunder be, even in a remote degree, attributable to you, it argues a carelessness unworthy of your proved attainments and

of your deservedly high repute. When I put myself again, as to this, in the imaginary position of your defender, I, of course, invoke haste, necessary haste, both in writing and in printing, to my aid; but yet, inwardly, "I hae my doots."

I can, however, with a vast number of readers, pass by this kind of halting in favour of your steady march in the direction of advocating all that is best and least besmirched, and decrying all that panders to a vicious or a merely vulgar taste, in the dramatic productions of the day. There you are never found wanting. In your own fashion, popular and successful, you are ever able, in a fluent and graceful manner, to put high lights upon what is really good, to dismiss with a just wrath what is really bad, and to qualify indifference with an indifferent air which is suitable to your subject, in that it avoids offence and yet swerves not from the truth. You are always at hand in exactly the right time and in exactly the right tune when something daintily turned in verse, no less correct than happily conceived, should be forthcoming for the retirement, or the benefit, or what not, of some old and just favourite of the public. And some of your other excellences in verse fall within my province for cordial praise, because many of them have naturally found their way to the semi-dramatic platform, and have, through willing and competent interpreters, evoked in audiences the very intensity and shade of feeling which must have been present to the author in the act of writing. These good works, which are on a par with your constant and well-expressed sympathy for the strugglers in "the profession," are connected only by the side way which I have indicated with your critical deliverances. But just as these utterances sound a note of hopefulness and helpfulness, so are your criticisms not only free from offence (save when offence is the only proper weapon), but also intended and able to convey the encouragement which true appreciation gives, alike to the actor who, seemingly at the top of tree, sees yet some bough to reach beyond our ken, and to the novice fully equipped with ideas to which he has not yet learnt to give a complete form. Your aid is undoubtedly valuable to the novice and to the "Compleat Actor," and you deserve gratitude from both, as from the play-goers whom it is their business to impress, instruct, or divert.

I remain, &c., L. Anon.

To Walter Herries Pollock, Esq.

SIR,—For some little time past I have missed both your initials and your Roman hand, which is perhaps more recognisable than you yourself may suppose, in articles of

dramatic criticism. From this I conclude, rightly or wrongly, that for a time at least you have abandoned some of those paths of literature which you were erst wont to adorn—or mistake. Mistakes do occur to him who adventures in a maze, and, as I shall presently show, criticism of the kind to which I am directing my attention, has for you some of those qualities which are offered by a maze to the uninstructed visitor. Assuming that my first conjecture is right, I fall upon a saying to be found in the works of Mr. Rudyard Kipling. This writer, excellent alike in prose or poetry, has put forward in one of his best stories the axiom "Once a journalist always a journalist." I think it possible, backed as I am by this authoritative saying, that you will some day resume the pen which you seem to have dropped. It is then with a hope for your future amendment, if that may be, that I address these few remarks to you.

To begin with, I have not very much fault to find with your style, and I may at once say that in "style" I include grammar, accuracy, and I might almost say clearness. But the qualifying adverb brings me to the chief fault, and that chiefest perhaps of all, which I do feel bound to find. I can put it very briefly. You are, or were, too confoundedly allusive. You seem to pride yourself on hyphened and almost telegraphic references, sometimes in the very midst of an otherwise lucid period, to matters which may or may not be accurately known to your own self. This may be a kind of self-tribute, and it may give you pleasure to see in all the glory of "per-r-int" an evidence to your own acquaintance, acquired by study or by chance with certain stage traditions or pieces of stage history which might be well pushed forward in a serious dramatic history or biography, but which, believe me, seem frivolous or at best out of place in an everyday criticism of actors who, some of them, happily, some, alas! unhappily on every day or every night, or sometimes nearly both, are with us. You discourse to us very wisely as you think of the Hamlet, let us say, of Mr. Zee. You exhibit a certain knowledge of your subject from the student's point of view; but you exhibit it, I'll inform you, at a length too great in itself, and far too disproportionate to the act and subject of your discussion. You begin in such a case as I have at random imagined by going back to Burbage and on to Davenant, with a passing look at the gossip about Davenant's origin. This takes you at least two paragraphs, which, like Hamlet himself, are fat, though, to do you justice, not always scant of breath, before you begin to tell us anything in the least

definite concerning the matter in which we are really interested. What kind of journalism is this? And what, pray, do you set yourself to accomplish when, after this excessive *prolegomena* (which may possibly cause Dr. Dryasdust to laugh, not *with*, but *at* you), what, I say, do you then perform? You make some keen remarks, maybe some that are well considered and to the point, on the acting of the particular mime who engages your attention, and in the making of them you show, as I have said, some scraps of care and knowledge which might go to form the equipment of a fine critic. But, to use a fine old Scottish phrase, you "Sin your mercies." You irritate, that is, your readers, because, like Tony Lumpkin (forgive me if in writing of you I catch some of your tricks), you cannot abear to disappoint yourself. You have what seems to you an apt allusion at your fingers' ends, and from those ends straight to the pen, from the pen to the paper, from the paper to the printers, and from the printers to the readers of the paper for which you write. It pleases you very likely to see it when the paper comes out, and to say to yourself, "One thing is certain, that not one of my brethren in criticism is at all likely to have hit on this particular illustration."

Very well. There is no harm in innocent self-gratification. But, let me seriously ask you, is this thing that I conceive may give you delight to be called, after all, an illustration? For instance, still keeping to our imaginary criticism of Hamlet by Mr. Zee, you dwell, not altogether amiss sometimes (for what critic, any more than what actor, can fail at all points of Hamlet?), on what Mr. Zee does or does not do in certain important passages of the great scene between Hamlet and his mother. This is all very well. One may agree or disagree with you, but, in the literal translation of French which you too often borrow from Thackeray, you at least make yourself a reason. One knows that you are driving at something definite, and one might pause to consider whether your reflections are or are not well inspired; but you will not give the opportunity. You call out, as it were, *Hey Presto*, and straightway you jig us off to an anecdote, with comments superfluous if concise, on what Baron or Lekain did in a somewhat similar scene of a play which was *not Hamlet*. Now, my good Sir, consider. In telling this anecdote and in commenting upon it you appeal to an instructed and an uninstructed class of readers, instructed, I mean, and the reverse in that particular matter. The instructed readers—and here I beg you to follow me closely—know all about it already, have doubt-

less made their own comments and do not want yours, to which they may justly prefer those provided by themselves. The uninstructed readers are simply bored by having their attention distracted from Mr. Zee by references to old-world folk about whom they care nothing. In fine, you aim (or is it but random shooting?) with both barrels, and you hit nothing. This I would have you lay to heart.

As to actual criticism you have a smattering which some have not of the great difficulties which beset the science of acting, and you are apt enough to make allowances for these. But I fancy I detect in you a leaning both in praise and dispraise to the attitude of a playgoer rather than that of the critic who should be swayed by no personal emotion or prejudice. You have your idols—there are perhaps few critics who have not—and I may admit that when one of them fails you do not conceal the fact from your readers, although you may wrap it round with complimentary phrases which, rightly considered, are but a poor compliment to the players whose feelings you may wish to spare in case of their seeing your criticism and recognising it as your handiwork. Some of these excellent people may be pleased for a moment, but do you suppose that, if they give more than a moment's thought to the matter, they say anything more to themselves than "Well, he has done his best to let us down gently"? Thus, I think, you handicap your own criticism, both for those whom it personally affects, and for those who also, more indirectly, may be affected by it. With every hope that you may profit by my observations,

I remain, &c.,

L. Anon.

MATTHEW ARNOLD AS THEATRICAL CRITIC.

By Henry Elliott.

EVERY cultivated playgoer and actor is familiar with the essay on "The French Play in London" which Mr. Matthew Arnold contributed to the *Nineteenth Century* for August, 1879, and which was afterwards published in his *Irish Essays and Others*. In this discourse, suggested by the performances of the Comédie Française at the London Gaiety in the above-named year, one finds the germs of Mr. William Archer's advocacy of a State-supported theatre and of Mr. Henry Arthur Jones's theory that there is no contemporary British drama.

Mr. Jones appears to have told Mr. Arnold (see the latter's *Letters*, Vol. II., page 209) that he had "nourished himself" on his works, and it is to Mr. Jones, it would seem, that we owe the few criticisms of English theatrical representations that Mr. Arnold left behind him.

Those criticisms appeared in the columns of the *Pall Mall Gazette* (over the signature of "An Old Playgoer") in the winter of 1882 and the spring of 1883, and they have never been reprinted. Bound up with "The French Play in London," they would make an interesting booklet, but I fear there is little chance of this coming to pass, and in the meantime they are beyond the reach of the great majority of British playgoers. That being so, it may be not unfruitful to draw attention to some of their more salient features.

There is record, in Mr. Arnold's *Letters*, of his having gone, in 1865, to see Lord Dundreary at the Haymarket, and in 1874 to witness *Hamlet*, with Mr. Irving in the title part, at the Lyceum. After that, the *Letters* are silent about the theatre until October, 1879, when Mr. Arnold acknowledges the receipt, from Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, of a letter and two dramatic pieces, *The Garden Party* and *A Clerical Error*, the former of which Mr. Arnold pronounces "extremely interesting," and the latter of which, he says, he "must try and see." "I am afraid," he adds, "we are still a long way off from the attainment of a satisfactory theatre and a satisfactory drama, but they will come in time." From another letter of Mr. Arnold's, dated November 2, 1882, we gather that Mr. Jones had invited Mr. Arnold to the first performance of *The Silver King*. In yet another, dated November 19, Mr. Arnold writes to Mr. John Morley, then editing the *Pall Mall Gazette*, saying that he had seen *The Silver King*, and offering to write for the paper a letter called forth by his impressions thereof.

On December 6th, the letter duly appeared. It opened with the statement that the writer was a sexagenarian (he was about three weeks from the completion of his sixtieth year) "who used to go much to the Princess's some five-and-thirty years ago, when Macready had an engagement there." "During the engagement I speak of," continued Mr. Arnold, "Macready acted, I think, all his great Shaksperean parts. But he was ill-supported, the house was shabby and dingy, and by no means full; there was something melancholy about the whole thing. You had before you great pieces and a powerful actor; but the theatre needs the glow of public and popular interest to brighten

it, and in England the theatre at that time was not in fashion." Very different from the Princess's of the early forties was the Princess's of 1882. "It was another world. . . . The theatre itself was renewed and transformed; instead of shabby and dingy, it had become decorated and brilliant. But the real revival was not in the paint and gilding, it was in the presence of the public. The public was there; not alone the old, peculiar public of the pit and gallery, with a certain number of the rich and refined in the boxes and stalls, and with whole, solid classes of English society conspicuous by their absence. No; it was a representative public, furnished from all classes, and showing that English society at large had now taken to the theatre.

"Equally new was the high level of the acting. Instead of the company with a single powerful and intelligent performer, with two or three middling ones, and with the rest moping and mowing in what was not to be called English but rather stagese, here was a whole company of actors, able to speak English, playing intelligently, supporting one another effectively. Mr. Wilson Barrett, as Wilfrid Denver, is so excellent that his primacy cannot be doubted. . . But it is the great merit of the piece that the whole is so effective, and that one is little disposed to make distinction between the several actors, all of them do their work so well."

And how about *The Silver King* itself?

"Well," wrote Mr. Arnold, "it is not Shakspere, it is melodrama. . . The essential difference between melodrama and poetic drama is that the one relies for its main effect upon an inner drama of thought and passion, the other upon an outer drama of (as the phrase is) sensational incidents. *The Silver King* relies for its main effect upon an outer drama of sensational incidents, and so far is clearly melodrama, transpontine melodrama." It had, however, its good points. "In general, in drama of this kind, the diction and sentiments, like the incidents, are extravagant, impossible, transpontine; here they are not. This is a very great merit, a very great advantage. . . . In general, throughout the piece the diction and sentiments are natural, they have sobriety and propriety, they are literature. It is an excellent and hopeful sign," concluded Mr. Arnold, "to find playwrights capable of writing in this style, actors capable of rendering it, a public capable of enjoying it."

Having been induced to go to the modern theatre once, Mr. Arnold appears to have felt moved to go again, and yet again. In December, 1882, *Impulse* (Mr. B. C. Stephenson's adaptation

of *La Maison du Mari*) was brought out at the St. James's Theatre, where, evidently, it was seen by Mr. Arnold, for he made it the subject of another communication to the *Pall Mall Gazette* on May 25, 1883. This time, alas! he had not a good word to say for the play. "A piece more perfectly unprofitable," he declared, "it is hard to imagine. . . French pieces have their reason for existing in the state of society which they reflect and interpret. . . But *Impulse*—what life does it render? . . That fraction of our society for which the French play and novel are a rendering of its own life is so small as to be quite unimportant. This is proved, indeed, by the transformation which the French play undergoes before the English playwright can present it to the charming faces, figures, and toilettes of our boxes and stalls. Virtue has to triumph; the *amant frivole* has to come to grief. Ingenious playwright! ingenuous 'society'! Know this as to your *amant*, as to your Victor de Riel. Where he exists, where he is an institution, matters may well enough pass as they pass in the genuine French play. . . where he is an exotic, nothing can make him tolerable; defeated or triumphant, he equally makes the piece, of which he is the centre, unpleasant, makes it ridiculous. *Impulse* is, in truth, in itself a piece intensely disagreeable. It owes its success to the singularly attractive, sympathetic, and popular personalities of Mr. and Mrs. Kendal. While they are on the stage, it is hard to be dissatisfied."

On October 11th, 1882, Mr. Irving had produced *Much Ado About Nothing* for the first time at the Lyceum. This Mr. Arnold also saw; but he was a leisurely writer, and it was not until May 30th, 1883, that he contributed to the *Pall Mall Gazette* his views on the performance. He then began with a reference to the Sultanas of old, who refused to listen to a philosophical treatise, and called for an interminable succession of taking stories. By what magic, Mr. Arnold went on to ask, did Mr. Irving induce the Sultanas of to-day to listen to Shakspere? From the utterances of the characters in *Impulse*, how did he manage to wile them away to the talk of Benedick and Beatrice? "It is not enough to say that *Much Ado About Nothing*, in itself beautiful, is beautifully put upon the stage, and that of ideal comedy this greatly heightens the charm. It is true, but more than this is requisite to bring the Sultanas. It is not enough to say that the piece is acted with an evenness, a general level of merit, which was not to be found years ago, when a Claudio so good as Mr. Forbes Robertson or a Don Pedro so

good as Mr. Terriss, would have been almost impossible. This also is true, but it would not suffice to bring the Sultanas." Rather did Mr. Arnold find the secret of the attractiveness of this representation of *Much Ado* in the magnetic force of two individualities. "It is almost always," he says, "by an important personality that great things are effected, and it is assuredly the personality of Mr. Irving and that of Miss Ellen Terry which have the happy effect of bringing the Sultanas and of filling the Lyceum.

"Both Mr. Irving and Miss Ellen Terry," Mr. Arnold went on to say, "have a personality which peculiarly fits them for ideal comedy. Miss Terry is sometimes restless and over-excited, but she has a spiritual vivacity which is charming. Mr. Irving has faults which have often been pointed out, but he has, as an actor, a merit which redeems them all, and which is the secret of his success: the merit of delicacy and distinction. In some of his parts he shows himself capable, also, of intense and powerful passion. But twenty other actors are to be found who have a passion as intense and powerful as his, for one other actor who has his merit of delicacy and distinction. . . . His true parts are those which most display his rare gift of delicacy and distinction; and such parts are offered, above all, in ideal comedy. May he long continue to find them there, and to put forth in them charm enough to win the Sultanas to art like *Much Ado About Nothing* as a change from art like *Fedora* and *Impulse!*"

Here, I believe, ended Mr. Arnold's incursions into the field of newspaper criticism of the theatre. "I must now," he wrote to Mr. Morley, "prepare for the invasion of America," where he had arranged to lecture. In the following year (May, 1884) he writes to Mr. Henry Arthur Jones—obviously after a visit to the Princess's—to say that there was "good writing in *Chatterton*, and good acting in Mr. Wilson Barrett's impersonation of the part, but the thing is too painful. I feel so strongly the defects of a situation where 'everything is to be endured, nothing to be done,' that I suppressed a dramatic sketch of my own [*Empedocles in Etna*] on that account."

If Mr. Arnold gave forth any further utterances on the modern theatre they have not been made public. Meanwhile, let us be thankful for what we have. In theatrical criticism Mr. Arnold was admittedly an amateur; but one wishes that there were more such amateurs about. If more men like Mr. Arnold would take an interest in the stage, how much better it would be alike for

playwrights, players, and playgoers in this Philistine land of ours!

THE FOREIGN INTRUSION.

By a Jaded Journalist.

I CALL it an intrusion, because that is really what it is. I suppose that we all admire—on this side idolatry—both Mme. Bernhardt and Mme. Réjane, and are very pleased to witness their performances now and again; one recognises, indeed, that they usually bring with them to London a few artists whom it is a pleasure to know and study; and I am sure that I should be the last in the world to discredit their own achievements, such as they are. I confess, candidly, that I am not an out-and-out laudator of Mme. Bernhardt, or Mme. Réjane, or any of the players with whom they surround themselves on their visits to England. Whatever may have been the case in the past, English acting has now nothing whatever to learn from the French. Even in *ensemble* our neighbours no longer surpass us, and, as for individual performances, if we have not an English Bernhardt or an English Réjane, I am not at all sure that we want either the one or the other.

One can appreciate without worshipping. We all acknowledge, I hope, Mme. Bernhardt's remarkable gifts and accomplishments—her complete command of all the resources of histrionics—her mastery of every possible stage device—her possession and utilization of the "grand manner"—her superb management of a delightful voice, the most liquid and caressing in the artistic world. We all admit—and gladly admit—that Mme. Réjane is a comedian of infinite resource, who has found in *Madame Sans-Gêne* a part perfectly fitted to her means, and who must always succeed in *rôles* which have in them a large infusion of the *bourgeoise*. The two players together may be said to be Paris incarnate—Paris on its romantic, Paris on its up-to-date, side. One can imagine them the delight of the classes whom they reflect and to whom they appeal; but for me, I protest, they have their limitations. They are always the same—always Bernhardt, always Réjane, each with her little tricks of style, her little "ways," her little fascinations, her Bernhardtisms, her Réjanisms. Of the two, I think, Mme. Réjane is always the more welcome to me, and (I take it) to others like me; there is a frankness, a sincerity, a freshness about her method which I fail to find in Mme. Bernhardt's. Mme. Réjane gives you impersonations openly and even ostentatiously unrefined in tone;

Mme. Bernhardt supplies you, night after night, with representations markedly artificial, obviously unreal. The latter lady has never been. to me, a convincing actress; she does not impersonate; one can always detect the strings which make the puppet dance. A great theatrical performer she assuredly is; she is, one might almost say, the theatre incarnate—the apotheosis of all that is most theatrical, most stagey, most "effective." Mme. Réjane is at least a sympathetic interpreter of humanity; Mme. Bernhardt appears to me to be for ever posing, for ever playing with one eye on her colleagues and the other on her audience, for ever aiming at "sensation," for ever determined to "fetch" and hold those who listen to her. A consummate actress—such, undoubtedly is Mme. Bernhardt; but a great dramatic artist, able to conceal her art, and so satisfying the demands of the most critical?—I do not think so.

However, that is not the main point in question. My complaint against the foreign players is that they come at the wrong time, that they clash with one another, that they try to put too much into too small a space, and also that they are apt to bore us with vain repetitions. They come at the height of the London "season." Why? Is it because they can leave Paris or Vienna or Berlin at no other period of the year? Does iron circumstance force them to swoop down upon us in June or in July, or not at all? If it does not, I assume that they visit us in those months because they think it is "the thing" to do so—because they imagine London will then be fullest of the sections of society from which they receive the most lucrative patronage. But London begins to fill directly Parliament opens; there are quite enough "swells" in it in April and May; there is no need whatever to wait till the leafy (and broiling) months of June and July. Evidently our player-visitors descend upon us in those months out of "sheer cussedness." There is no other explanation of their arbitrary proceedings. And if they *must* come to us in the middle of the summer, why do they all come together? Why don't they spread themselves a bit? Why not study each other's arrangements, and play in succession, instead of simultaneously? This year, Mme. Bernhardt made her first appearance on June 17 and her last (barring a flying matinée) on July 14. Mme. Réjane made her *rentrée* on June 28, and her final bow on July 16. For nearly three weeks, therefore, these two actresses were playing against each other, in a city which, big as it is, is not absolutely overflowing with supporters of the French

theatre. Was this wise? Was it prudent? Must there not have been many occasions on which playgoers had to decide between the two "stars," taking the one and leaving the other —whereas, if the one had followed the other, each might in turn have ruled the roost?

It is a mistake to squeeze the annual foreign "season" into so small a space. From June 17th (when Mme. Bernhardt came) to July 16 (when Mme. Réjane left us)—that was just a month. And what a month! During that time Mme. Bernhardt appeared in two new pieces—*Lorenzaccio* and *Spiritisme*, and Mme. Réjane in one new piece—*La Douleureuse*—and in a part new to London so far as she was concerned—that of Frou-Frou. In addition Mme. Réjane was seen in *Madame Sans-Gêne*, while Mme. Bernhardt figured in various items of her standard repertory—*La Dame aux Camélias*, *L'Etrangère*, *Fédora*, *La Tosca*, and so forth. Who but the unhappy professional playgoer, the journalist condemned to record all these changes of programme, could keep up with the variations of a bill-of-fare so extensive? "Society" certainly could not do so. "Society," in June and July, has something else to do than go to the play. It has to go to Epsom and Sandown Park, to Hurlingham and Ranelagh; it has to give dinners, and receptions, and balls, which not only distract attention from the theatre but absolutely prevent attendance at it. The middle-classes do not do these things; but, then, it is not they to whom the foreign players look for support—which is fortunate, for in June and July the middle classes are more than ever on their bicycles. As for the "regular playgoer"—the devoted person, of all classes, who never, if he can help it, misses anything good at "the play"—how is he to act in the presence of such demands as are made upon him, by the foreign and the native theatre together, in June and July? After all, the keenest enthusiast for the stage cannot possibly pass all his nights in the playhouse. He must have an occasional "evening at home." And in respect to the foreign season of 1897, I suspect that the said playgoer, for all his enthusiasm, has taken that evening at home pretty frequently. Who wants to witness a *Lorenzaccio*, a *Spiritisme*, or a *La Douleureuse?* Who wants to see Mme. Réjane give a "new reading" of *Frou-Frou?* Who wants to look on while Mme. Bernhardt plays Marguerite Gauthier, Fédora, La Tosca, and the rest of them, for the thousandth or the millionth time?

So far, I have made no reference to the performances by

Madame Odilon at Daly's Theatre. That is because they were only eight in number, and attracted but a moderate number of spectators. Nevertheless, to them also applies the objection that they were given in June and July, while Mme. Bernhardt was at the Adelphi and Mme. Réjane was at the Lyric—two famous "stars" with whom the unfamiliar Austrian lady, however gifted, could not possibly compete. How could the promoters of Mme. Odilon's season hope, for a moment, that it would be a pecuniary success? I hope the Viennese comedian will come back to us and play in purely German pieces, but I hope also she will not come to us in June or in July, or at any rate will so time her visit that she does not clash with other Continental luminaries. I venture to think that of the foreign drama a little goes a long way. We may not have a very remarkable native drama; as a matter of fact, we have not. But, such as it is, there is plenty of it; it has got to be seen and to be written about; and when the foreigner intrudes, he (or she) should do so as mildly as possible. He (or she) is welcome enough, in a sense; but we do not want him (or her) in the lump, or when we are otherwise very busy.

NONCONFORMISTS AND THE STAGE.

By Alfred Halstead.

THE *Theatre* for June had an article commenting on the remarkable change in the attitude of the Church towards the Stage. Forty years ago, Mr. Gladstone, at a dinner to Charles Kean, called the theatre the "handmaid of Christianity," but he evidently spoke in an historical sense, with the Miracle Plays and Mysteries of the Middle Ages in his mind's eye. It is often imagined by very clever people that the Puritans alone have shown enmity to the stage, but the writer points out that the Church in Paris excommunicated all players. The Puritans suppressed the stage altogether, and the Restoration drama, which the aforesaid clever people are fond of calling a re-action against the Puritan policy, was simply the reflex of the general laxity in morals. All the time, unfortunately, the memory of the Restoration drama overlaid the glorious traditions of the Elizabethan age, and the antipathy of the modern Nonconformist has its root in that bad time. It is curious that some writers on Church and stage matters, especially when comparing the change of Church attitude, never refer to the remarkable change in the attitude of the Nonconformists, who make up at least half the people of England with any religious sympathies at

all. Thirty years ago the average Nonconformist never entered a theatre. The traditions of the Puritans, of whom he is the legitimate descendant, were strong within him. A few of the more liberally minded would occasionally, and with much searching of heart, attend a theatre where a good Shaksperian play was in progress. The Lyceum was the only theatre where the typical Nonconformist would be found, Mr. Irving was the actor whom alone he would patronise. The minstrels at St. James's Hall were for years the recognised relaxation of the country pastor or deacon when he went to the metropolis to attend various functions of the "May Meetings" at Exeter Hall! It soon dawned upon him, however, that the Gilbert-Sullivan operas were at least a trifle higher in the intellectual scale, and no small part of the success of Mr. D'Oyly Carte's ventures is owing even now to Nonconformist patronage. There are thousands of them yet who will not see a play by any means, but who will enjoy *Patience*, *The Mikado*, or *Utopia*. It may be said that the bulk of Nonconformists only patronise the theatre in a careful and select fashion. Shakspere's plays they witness, and such modern plays as *Liberty Hall* and *Sweet Lavender* they will go to; but they offer a stout resistance to the charms of the musical comedy piece of the *Shop Girl* variety.

If the attitude of the Nonconformist to the stage has been hostile or suspicious, what has been the attitude of the Stage towards Nonconformists? At one time it was almost impossible for a Dissenter to go to a theatre without seeing himself lampooned, caricatured, and even insulted. The modern playwright nearly always made his hypocrites and snufflers Nonconformists. He was always a deacon at some "Little Bethel." Mr. Henry Arthur Jones was a great sinner in this respect, though there are special reasons in his case which make his attitude the more astonishing. If the type of a hard, stern, implacable man was required, again the Nonconformist was drawn upon. This was not because the playwright knew anything about the types he depicted, but simply because he was conventional, and had no originality, information, or invention. He took his notions as to one half of his countrymen from the ribald dramatists of the Restoration, or from the Stiggins of Charles Dickens. Beyond these types his mind could not stray. This was bad art, because it was not true to life. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at that these plays have practically vanished from the stage, or are relegated to fourth or fifth-rate touring companies. To libel and caricature the men who belong to what Matthew Arnold called "the

best and the most serious part of our nation" was to insult half the people of England, and the great majority of the people of Scotland. To represent them as ignorant, cunning, and snuffling hypocrites, or as cold, hard, stern moralists, was to banish from the play-house a large and important constituency.

This policy met its due reward. But the loss was not wholly on the side of the playwright. The Nonconformist, liberalised by the culture which he at last obtained from the Universities and other sources hitherto closed to him, was restricted in his theatrical patronage to the plays of Shakspere and the Gilbert-Sullivan operas. He still sticks to the old morality. He believes in the sacredness of the marriage-vow, and he insists on a clean and wholesome play, in which the old-fashioned virtues are not ridiculed, and the lessons of love and self-renunciation are maintained. He has lost his objection to the stage as the stage. He recognises, with Archdeacon Sinclair, that the theatre may be an influence for good, and he reads with cordial sympathy such remarks as were made in *The Theatre* some time ago on "Nastiness on the Stage." He believes that a play may be witty without being wanton, and funny without being filthy. And the great success of certain modern plays which fulfil these conditions, and the popularity of certain actors and actresses who are believed to embody them, is owing to Nonconformists much more than is generally credited. It is true they do not gush about these plays and players. The old leaven has not quite ceased to work. But it has a strongly selective influence. Sir Henry Irving has done more than any living man to reconcile Nonconformists to the stage. Mr. Beerbohm Tree and Mr. George Alexander have also done their share. The modern Nonconformist has come to see that there are plenty of decent, wholesome plays on the stage to-day, as well as plays which are neither the one nor the other. He is beginning to recognise it as a duty to help to make the former successful, and severely to boycott the others. This spirit, as we know from not a little experience, is rapidly growing, and we venture to say that it is the duty of playwrights and managers to encourage it. And we also believe that it will pay them to do so.

JOHN OXENFORD.

By Frederick Hawkins.

MORE than twenty years have elapsed since we laid John Oxenford to rest at Kensal-green. It is matter for surprise that so long a period has passed without any collection of

his writings being given to the world. His chief dramatic criticisms, for instance, would form one of the most illuminative stage records of the century, and would, I venture to think, give him a rank at least equal in this way to that of Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, Leigh Hunt, and George Henry Lewes. Why, then, has not such a work been done? Because, no doubt, those who could do it *con amore* have not had the necessary leisure. Anyone attempting it would have to go through the files of *The Times* for nearly forty years, carefully separate the important from the ephemeral, and then, perhaps, without hope of adequate pecuniary reward, employ an amanuensis to make transcripts that might fill two goodly-sized volumes. Frank Marshall had all the qualifications for the task, but was too much occupied with his inestimable edition of Shakspere to think of anything else. Oxenford himself, the most modest of men, deprecated the idea. In his declining years I remarked to him that by acting upon it, or by writing a history of the theatre during his time, he would raise an enduring monument to his own memory. "No," he said, "I am too old now, and I would be remembered only by my friends." I offered to make any number of transcripts for him, but to no purpose. However, there are cases in which the wishes of the dead may be rightly set aside in the interests of the living and of future generations; and I venture to think that this is one in point. Such a book as I have suggested would be simply invaluable.

Let us glance, if somewhat briefly, at the story of John Oxenford's life. He was born at Camberwell, then a good deal more rural than suburban, in the summer of 1812. His father, William Oxenford, was a prosperous merchant connected with the Customs; his mother, after whom a daughter of mine was to be named, united, as I am not likely to forget, rare brightness of intelligence to gentleness of disposition and old-world grace of manner. He was educated at private schools, notably under the care of a rather eccentric genius, Mr. S. T. Friend. His taste for theatricals became manifest in his boyhood. "I remember," a fellow-pupil writes, "his eager dramatic efforts in the drawing-room at Camberwell. He was but a boy—a very graceful and attractive boy. I could get him at that time to think of little else than the drama, though he was far ahead of all around him in scholarship at fourteen years of age; and I bear testimony to his unsurpassed sweetness of character and self-forgetting nobleness and child-likeness." Considering his exceptional attainments, we may well feel astonished to learn that to a large extent

he was self-taught. In his teens, while not indifferent to out-door sports, he acquired Greek, Latin, and the principal modern languages entirely without aid. His father intending him for the law, he went as articled clerk to a firm of solicitors in the City, there to find a colleague in William Bovill. In legal studies, it is to be feared, Oxenford made but slight progress. He neglected them for periodical literature, haunted the theatres, and presently, in his twenty-third year, had the satisfaction of seeing a farce from his pen, *My Fellow Clerk*, successfully played by Buckstone and Wrench at the Lyceum. One night he might have been seen staggering along under the weight of a copy—one of my most valued possessions—of Genest's ten-volume *The Account of the English Stage*. In or shortly before 1840 he succeeded Michael Nugent as the dramatic and operatic critic of *The Times*, the City editor of which, William Alsager, was his mother's brother. For a time he was assisted by facetious Charles Kenney, who needed a little more good sense to retain his position, and by James William Davison, to whom, about 1849, he handed over all musical matters. He was described at the outset of his career as "a tall, erect, slim young man, voluble, quick of movement, and breezy in manner." Lifted above worldly cares from the first, he gave up law for literature on his appointment to *The Times*. He devoted most of his time to plays, reviews, translations, tales, libretti, poems, short biographies for encyclopædias, and essays on a large variety of subjects, acquiring a style almost unique in its purity, ease, and delicacy of touch. No one could have a greater passion for reading than he had. Davison, a life-long friend, called him a "devourer of books." He seemed to have explored or looked over every field of literature. He had "preferences"—as in the case of the drama, theatrical history, classical learning, folk-lore, and, above all, German thought—but few "exclusions." He even fitted himself to discuss theorems and problems with masters of mathematics. A keen thinker, he might well have framed a philosophy of his own; but, as Davison says, he was so absorbed in the search of fresh knowledge that he spent much of his time in reading when he might have been writing. "He must have been instinctively a critic. When a new book on a philosophical theme came under his notice, he would read, digest it, and in a luminous essay, partly descriptive, partly critical, tell those all about it who may not have had time at their disposal, or the same irrepressible inclination to research." For some years he was one of the pillars of the *Saturday Review*,

now as a critic, anon as a reviewer. Moreover, he was passionately fond of social enjoyments, and would spend many hours with Dickens, Thackeray, Lytton, Charles Kean, Talfourd, Jerrold, the Broughs, or Forster. In all such circles, it has been said, his advent was a pleasure, his departure a pain. "There goes an intellectual giant." said the author of *Pendennis* to Davison on the steps of the Feilding Club one night, as they watched the dramatic critic of *The Times* going homewards after a keen encounter of wit and erudition and argument. Esteemed by all, he filled his post with increasing honour to himself, as to the great journal he represented, for more than thirty-five years. His last critique was on Sir Henry Irving's Macbeth (1875)—a critique over which, enfeebled by a long illness, he broke down so badly that he sent in his resignation on the following day. He died in 1877, within a few weeks of writing for the first number of *The Theatre*, begun as a weekly paper, an article on "Stage Decorum."

It is as a dramatic critic, perhaps, that Oxenford will be mainly remembered. His experience of the stage was probably unique in its extent and variety. He had many remarkable players and playwrights to deal with—among others, Macready, Bulwer Lytton, Helen Faucit, Anderson, Phelps, Charles Kean and his wife, Rachel, Browning, Charles Mathews, Mme. Vestris, Planché, Robson, Creswick, Mrs. Nisbet, Mrs. Honey, Mrs. Stirling, Brooke, Mrs. Keeley, Buckstone, Webster, Miss Woolgar, Talfourd, Robson, Mme. Celeste, Priscilla Horton, Wright, Fechter, Toole, Sothern, Boucicault, Walter Lacy, Barry Sullivan, Amy Sedgwick, Kate Bateman, Watts Phillips, Jefferson, Tom Taylor, Montgomery, Chippendale, Compton, T. W. Robertson, the Bancrofts, Albery, George Honey, Henry J. Byron, John Hare, the Broughs, Ellen Terry, the Kendals, Adelaide Neilson, Gilbert, Merivale, Burnand, and Irving. I put down the names as they occur to me in the hurry of writing, not pretending that the list is complete, and without regard to strict chronological order. In one respect, it is clear, Oxenford had not quite a free hand, though he could always say what he liked. An actor whom he had adversely criticised sent an angry remonstrance to the paper. Delane, Yates tells us in his autobiography, showed the letter to Oxenford. "I have no doubt," said the great editor, "that you were perfectly right in all you wrote. But that is not the question. The real fact is that these matters are of too small importance to become subjects for discussion. Whether a play is

good or bad, whether a man acts well or ill, is of very little consequence to the great body of our readers; and I could not think of letting the paper become the field for argument on the point. So in future, my good fellow, write your notices so as much as possible to avoid that sort of letter being addressed to the office. You understand?" Davison received a similar admonition in regard to some remarks he had made about a trombone at Covent Garden. "Oxenford," adds Yates, "'understood;' and in that interview *The Times*' editor voluntarily threw away the chance of being supplied with dramatic criticism as keen in its perspicuity as Hazlitt's, as delightful in its geniality as Lamb's." I must take leave to say that this conveys a wrong impression. The effect of Delane's words upon Oxenford was simply to make him substitute the general for the particular. Neither Hazlitt nor Lamb could have rivalled his notices of important events. Here we had graphic description, felicity of diction, scholarship, independence of judgment, ample knowledge of theatrical history, a readiness to receive new ideas, an appreciation of acting as one of the fine arts. He approached everything in an appreciative but not uncritical spirit; he estimated a play with exclusive reference to its aims; he was always ready to welcome new ideas when they deserved a welcome. Partly as a result of his mathematical studies, he could give an admirably clear and precise account of a plot, happily separating the essential from the non-essential. It has been said that Oxenford was too lenient in his judgments. Only to some extent is this reproach justifiable. No doubt he was more inclined to generosity than harshness. Towards the end, at a dinner given in his honour, he remarked that, while trying to do his duty, he had "never caused an actor's wife or children to cry." For to inflict pain upon others was to inflict still more pain upon himself. Moreover, his practical knowledge of the stage enabled him to understand the conditions under which a piece is first brought out, and which are far less favourable on the first night than on the second. As the *Pall Mall Gazette* once pointed out, "for a great number of years the plays at the London theatres were so poor that to describe them from a high point of view would have been uniformly to damn them. Looked at from a lower point of view—that, for instance, of the ordinary playgoer—they could not be merely patronised, but absolutely praised. Mr. Oxenford seemed to be an optimist, when he was, in fact, a pessimist making the best of a bad job, and striving to content himself with a low ideal

because a high ideal was out of the question." He would not employ his Nasmyth hammer to crack nuts. Nevertheless, he "did his duty;" and those who could read between the lines—the section of the public for whom he particularly wrote—were duly instructed. Friendship did not hinder him from telling the truth when it was necessary. I was with him in his box at the first performance of a piece by Andrew Halliday. Just before the curtain rose the author came in. "Original?" asked Oxenford, after the usual courtesies. "Oh, yes," was the reply. I noticed, as the performance went on, that the great critic looked more than ordinarily thoughtful. Two or three days passed before his notice appeared. He then showed that this "original" piece was really little more than a translation of an old and forgotten Italian comedy, a copy of which Halliday, perhaps, had picked up at a bookstall.

One admirable example of Oxenford's writing is to be found in his criticism of *Rip Van Winkle* when that play was first given by Mr. Jefferson in London. The following extracts will speak for themselves, hastily as they may have been penned :—

In Mr. Jefferson's hands the character of Rip Van Winkle becomes the vehicle for an extremely refined psychological exhibition. In the first act he appears as a fine hearty man, aged about 30 years, with a frank, open countenance, rendered rather picturesque than otherwise by his dishevelled hair and tattered garments. He is so confirmed a drunkard that he has not so much as a sober interval. He will drink in company or he will drink alone; but under any circumstances, if a cup of schiedam comes within his reach, he will not let it go till it is empty. And yet his vicious inclination can scarcely be called morbid. His potations rather improve than spoil his temper; and, far from seeking to drown care in the bowl, he is such a happy-go-lucky sort of wight that he has no care to drown. He is beaming with a perpetual good nature, to which alcohol seems to be the necessary aliment, and which is rendered additionally unctuous by his dialect —a dialect, we may observe, that seems to be more German than Dutch in its character. Even though he greatly fears his wife, and almost execrates her in the presence of his boon companions, we perceive that there is nothing very harrowing in his terror, and that his dislike cannot approach malignity. The expression of any emotions is accompanied by a chuckle, as if he thought, with Rabelais, that life is at best a farce, and was determined to take things easy. It is only when his wife, exasperated by his persistent inebriety, turns him out of doors into a stormy night that he is stricken to the desperate nor vindictive. This freedom from malice always enlists the sympathies of the audience on the side of disreputable Rip; and however the declamations of his wife may delight teetotallers, impartial observers who see such very good-humoured vice placed in juxtaposition to such very cross virtue cannot help siding with the former. Let it not be supposed, however, that Rip is altogether a fool. A roguish money-lender, who, by making him a shade more drunk than usual, hopes to trap him into an alienation of important rights, is suddenly met by a petrified

smile, plainly showing that business is impossible. The man is as void of expression as a toad; but he is also as immovable. In the short second act, which is occupied by the meeting of Rip Van Winkle with the ghostly Hudson and his spectral crew, there is no further development of character; but when the Dutchman wakes in the third act, after a sleep of 20 years, the portraiture progresses. He is now an aged man with white flowing hair and beard, who must be seventy or eighty years of age; and although the change from the Rip of the first act is greater than could possibly have been effected by the mere lapse of four lustra, we would rather attribute the completeness of the transformation to the effect of Hudson's infernal beverage than suggest a correction of the seeming exaggeration . . . The aged Rip has not altogether lost the disreputable peculiarities of his younger days. He cannot even now resist the temptation of a cup of schiedam when one is presented to him; but his former nature is toned down, and his affectionate disposition is more visible on the surface. Thinking that the woman whom he has so often execrated is dead, he honours her with a tear, and his love for the daughter whom he left a little girl, crying over his expulsion, and whom he finds a full-grown woman asserts itself with all force.

Mr. Jefferson may well have felt gratified to receive such a tribute from such a source.

I have incidentally spoken of Oxenford's susceptibility to new ideas and impressions. Far from being a *laudator temporis acti*, he retained a marked juvenility of mind to the end, was always willing to hail a fresh departure if it happened to be good. Take, for instance, his strenuous support of the Robertsonian comedy at the old Prince of Wales's. "There was a great gathering of the light literary division," writes Mr. Clement Scott, "at the little theatre on the first night" of *Society*. "It was dear old Tom Hood, our leader then, who sounded the bugle; and the boys of the light brigade cheerfully answered the call of their chief. . . . It was a genuine success. We of the light brigade could not work miracles. We might have written our heads off, and still have done no good for the new school. Luckily, there was at that time as critic to *The Times* a man of keen and penetrating judgment. John Oxenford knew what was good as well as any man, and he knew how to say it into the bargain. He was not a slave to old traditions, and when he had a good text what a wonderful dramatic sermon he could preach! . . . The heavy brigade of influential writers, led by John Oxenford, patted the new movement on the back; the light division, led by Tom Hood and others, lent their enthusiasm to the good cause." Even more characteristic was the welcome he gave to Henry Irving, though the actor's daring originality of thought and method must have disquieted for a time one who had admired Macready, Phelps, and Charles

Kean. To his instantaneous and emphatic recognition of the power shown by the actor in *The Bells* I drew attention in these pages some months ago. In all that Irving did he felt the keenest interest. "He is the most intellectual actor I have seen," he once remarked to me; and he had seen a good many intellectual actors. Of Irving's Richelieu he wrote:—

His defence of Julie de Mortemar when the minions of the king would snatch her from his arms, the weight of sacerdotal authority with which he threatens to "launch the curse of Rome," his self-transformation into the semblance of a Hebrew prophet of the olden time, with whom imprecations were deeds, combine together to produce a most astounding effect. Here is tragic acting in the grandest style, and it will be borne in mind that although *Richelieu* is not a tragedy, it belongs practically to the tragical category, as none can do justice to it but a tragedian. Before the effect of the fulmination was subsided came the well-known lines—

Walk blindly on—behind thee stalks the headsman.
Ha! ha! how pale he is! Heaven save my country!

The scornful laugh by which the flow of indignation is checked, and which was a great point with Mr. Macready, had told with surprising force, and when the Cardinal had fallen back exhausted the old-fashioned excitement which we associate with the days of Edmund Kean and his "wolves" was manifested once more in all its pristine force. Enthusiastic shouts of approbation came from every part of the house. The pit not only *rose*, but made its rising conspicuous by the waving of countless hats and handkerchiefs. Not bare approval but hearty sympathy was denoted by this extraordinary demonstration; and this sympathy nothing but genius and thorough self-abandonment on the part of the artist could have produced.

Then as to Mr. Irving's original Hamlet, which held the stage for two hundred nights, the longest run of a Shaksperean play on record:—

It is more than probable that he has never seen any predecessor of extraordinary eminence enact the part. At all events, it is certain that the Hamlet in the play-book has been realised by Mr. Irving upon the stage without passing through any medium but that of his own thought. The learned will turn over their books to discover what was done by Betterton, what by Kemble, what by Charles Young; but their studies will avail them nothing towards an estimate of Mr. Irving, who stands aloof from the pedigree beginning with Betterton and ending with Charles Kean. Why is Hamlet so irresolute? If we rightly interpret Mr. Irving's performance, his reply to the question is to the effect that the nature of Hamlet is essentially tender, loving, and merciful. He is not a weak man called upon to do something beyond his powers, but he is a kindly man urged to do a deed which, according to the *lex talionis*, may be righteous, but which is yet cruel. There is a theory to the effect that Hamlet, while assuming madness, is really somewhat insane. From this theory we entirely dissent, at the same time admitting that his sensitive nature subjects him to the highest degree of nervous excitement. This could not be more clearly expressed than by Mr. Irving. Most powerfully is the nervous condition exhibited in the scene with Ophelia. The pretended

madness, the unquenchable love, and the desire to utter stern truths seemed to hustle against each other. The words seemed to be flung about at random, and the facial movements corresponded to the recklessness of the words. The storm of applause which followed this display of genius denoted not only admiration but wonder.

Of the actor's Macbeth, so widely different from the figure previously known on the stage by that name, the critic had equally flattering things to say.

Oxenford's other work may be briefly dealt with. As a dramatist, I think, he did not achieve very marked success. In all, he wrote or adapted between seventy and eighty plays, a large majority of which did well for a time, and a few of which remain on the stage. Perhaps he was at his best in the region of original farce. One of the earliest of these, *Twice Killed*, was translated into French, under the title of *Bon Soir, Monsieur Pantalon*, and was "retranslated" for London as an operetta. Passing to his longer plays, we find several skilful adaptations—*The Porter's Knot* (for Robson), *Brother Sam* (for Sothern), *A Reigning Favourite* (for Mrs. Stirling), *The Two Orphans* (for Mr. Henry Neville), *The Last Days of Pompeii* (for Miss Hodson), and *East Lynne*. At the instance of Webster, he produced the only satisfactory English version of *Tartuffe* we have yet had. He wrote graceful libretti; he translated a collection of fine French songs. Another of his feats was a rendering of Calderon's *Vida es Sueno* (*Life is a Dream*). "I feel," Lewes wrote in his little volume on the Spanish drama, "that Calderon here suffers no greater injustice than that which a poet must always suffer in translation." Probably the highest services Oxenford did the intellectual world was as an interpreter of German thought. He had been preceded in this by Carlyle and others, but was to hold a prominent place in the little group. He translated many German books, including the first half of Goëthe's autobiography. Above all, he wrote the famous article in the *Westminster Review* for 1853, on "Iconoclasm in German Philosophy." Schopenhauer was at that time quite ignored by his own countrymen. "A foreign voice," writes Dr. Hueffer, "was suddenly and loudly raised in testimony of the neglected philosopher's merits. The author was Mr. John Oxenford, the well-known dramatist, critic, and scholar. The article was masterly in all respects. It may, without exaggeration, be described as the foundation of Schopenhauer's fame, both in his own country and abroad. The prophet was acknowledged by his people." Schopenhauer, who knew English well, read the article with as much surprise as delight. "This writer,"

he said, "reflects not only my meaning, but my mannerisms. It is like a looking-glass. Most wonderful!"

In private life Oxenford was universally admired for his wit, his humour, his conversational power, his wealth of learning, his proved goodness of heart. Though young enough to be his grandson, I became one of his intimate associates, and had the honour of being selected to help him in his work. Looking back to that time, I am reminded of the words, "The friendship of a great man is a blessing from the gods." His favourite haunt towards the end was the old Junior Garrick Club, where we used to dine together almost every Saturday, and where he reigned as Dryden did at Wills's coffee-house. His striking presence, with his tall figure, his leonine head, his thick white hair, his reddish face, his dark eyes gleaming at you under heavy brows, through gold-rimmed spectacles. I still seem to hear his sonorous voice, his perpetual laugh, his thorough enjoyment of a good story. One cause of the affection he inspired was that he never paraded his erudition. Nobody, as Yates says, could have worn it so lightly, or have conveyed it so unconsciously and unpretendingly. I doubt whether any member of the club was unconnected with a conspiracy on a particular occasion to do him homage. We had his portrait painted for us; we entertained him at dinner. While indifferent to praise or dispraise, he was yet pleased, as he told me, to read an article in *Punch* on the incident by Shirley Brooks, the editor, who pleasantly begged leave to have a share in the tribute.

Long a deist, Oxenford died a Roman Catholic (as a result of the influence exercised over his mind by Frank Marshall), and was buried accordingly. His conversion I believe to have been sincere, though he once grimly remarked to me, "It is a good thing, after all, to be securely packed away to heaven, or at least with a legible address." Of the articles respecting him in the weekly press at his death, the most comprehensive, I think, was that which appeared in *Truth*. "Mr. Oxenford," Mr. Labouchere wrote, "was a man of varied attainments, and could criticise a Greek play or the recondite lucubrations of a German metaphysician as well as an English melodrama. This eclecticism of intellect enabled him to take a large, broad view of theatrical authors and of theatrical performers. He was of all schools, and of no school. He never damned a play because it was not likely to live for ever, and although he was not sparing of blame where blame was deserved, he was always kind to those whom it was his duty to criticise. He was averse to no form of dramatic

entertainment, and never complained because one particular form was preferred for the nonce to another. To his mind a play fulfilled its end when it met with a fair meed of approval from the audience to whom it was submitted. When he witnessed a comedy he did not complain of its not being a tragedy; when he pronounced upon the merits of a melodrama he did not take the opportunity to protest against melodramas. If a farce provoked laughter, it had accomplished, according to him, the mission of a farce; and if the plot of a burlesque was ridiculous, he regarded this as an additional charm in an entertainment the aim of which was to cause amusement by the free use of ridicule. What I mainly admired in Mr. Oxenford was the generous, but strictly fair, view which he took of actors and actresses. If some performer had been puffed into temporary notice he made this clear to his readers without absolutely saying it, but never did actor or actress deserve praise without obtaining it from him. Many a performer who could not afford to buy a play and who did not care to wheedle one out of an author, who had no troop of friends to simulate applause, and who never cringed before critics as though they were the arbiters of destiny, found that John Oxenford was not slow to recognise talent. A dramatic author himself, perhaps his chief fault was that he took too kindly a view of the men who, without one single instinct of the dramatic art, have endeavoured, by crying down alike real comedy and real tragedy, and by puffing themselves into a spurious notoriety, to convert the stage into an arena for the exhibition of their vanity."

THE LONDON "RELACHE."

By Arthur W. a Beckett.

WHEN the House votes millions during the course of the afternoon, and the editors of daily papers send letters from outsiders to the composing-room instead of the waste-paper basket, the theatrical managers announce "last nights." In the days of old the established companies used to start with their répertoires for a tour in the provinces. Nowadays the fashion is followed at a distance. A successful play has been produced, say in March, and immediately the "provincial rights" have been purchased by an organiser of touring parties; but the astute actor-manager (the creator of the piece) has reserved for himself certain towns of first-rate importance that are to claim his attention during the recess. It is in August that the gentle-

man in question looks up his agreement, and with the assistance of his agent-in-advance takes his departure. Then the boards usually containing the double-crown play-bills are covered with blue or some announcement that "the theatre will open early in October," either with a fresh play or a revival of the latest triumph. In modern times matters theatrical are a little mixed. The "dead season" was supposed to commence at the end of July and terminate just before the winter. The late Dion Boucicault used to bring out his Drury Lane dramas in August, but, when asked the reason why, used to say that he did so because at that time he had no cause to fear competition. "You see," he explained to me one day when we were discussing the matter, "London is never empty. There must be a certain number of people doing nothing in particular in the evenings, and probably thirsting for the play. Well, if no other theatre but Drury Lane is open they will flock to Drury Lane. The stalls and boxes may be empty because it is aristocratic at the west-end to leave town during August and September, but the pit and gallery will pay." And I believe he was right. The late Sir Augustus Harris, it will be remembered, followed the precedent set by his fellow dramatist, and with the happiest results. But Drury Lane was the exception that proved the rule. However, although the Haymarket lost Buckstone and his excellent comedians, there were other tenants that came year after year to "the little house" in the dead season. For instance, the late Mlle. Beatrice was an *habituée*. This talented lady had a capital company and a very good répertoire. She herself was a great acquisition to the house, and played the heroine in *Frou-Frou* admirably. She had a slight accent, and in later days might perhaps have relinquished some of the younger rôles to her juniors without prejudicing the plays in which she took part. I had the honour of her acquaintance, and found her the most charming of manageresses. She was by birth, education, and inclination a lady. I was surprised that she did not stay in London, and once suggested the expediency of such a course. She smiled, and told me she could not afford it. The provinces, she said, were much more lucrative than town. If she stayed in the metropolis she might have a failure, and that would mean a great loss—perhaps ruin. But in the country, with her répertoire of established successes, she was always sure of a welcome. She admitted that the provincials liked to know that she had been seen by the cockneys. "My visit to London," said she, "is very much like attendance at one of her Majesty's Drawing

Rooms. It gives me prestige with my rural friends. They feel on a par with the Londoners when they know that they are looking at players who have trod the boards of the Haymarket Theatre." Another cause of her success were her dresses, which were of the costliest materials and the first fashion. The squire's wife and the rector's daughter liked to see the latest from London. Nowadays, a piece when it is sent touring in the hands of half-a-dozen companies is furnished with fac-similes of the original costumes. The dresses are sometimes the principal attraction. But, to do the provincials justice, it is right to say that one talented couple have recently devoted their entire time to the country. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal are rarely seen in town, and their success depends upon something more important than silks and chiffons. I have been told that foreign artists of repute are taking the hint, and ignoring the metropolis. Well, fortunately for we poor leg-tied Londoners, there are several admirable actor-managers amongst us who keep us instructed and amused. While Sir Henry Irving, Mr. Charles Wyndham, Mr. Beerbohm Tree, and Mr. George Alexander are faithful to us, we can afford to do without "those others."

To return to London in the dead season. Yes, it is very dead indeed. Most of the theatres are closed, and for the best of reasons—there is no one to take them. Anything new has been tried while town has been *en résidence*. It is never difficult to secure a play-house for an experiment. Without giving names, I may safely say that there are certain temples of the drama ready at all times for a dramatic idol. In the height of the season "plays of a fortnight" can always secure a show at one or the other of these unfortunate establishments. They come like shadows and so depart, leaving nought behind, save their titles arranged in coloured glass. When every house had its stock company these phantom-pieces used to appear in the recess or worry the dramatic critics at a matinée. Nowadays they are condemned when London is London. Then the plea of Dion Boucicault does not hold good when Cremorne, long left without a successor, finds respectable substitutes in the Exhibition at Earl's Court and the attractions of the Imperial Institute. I use the word "respectable" in its best sense, for the company at the two *al fresco* institutions to which I referred are quite the form of "the young person" about whom a noted dramatist has said so much. Who will go to a theatre in the dog-days when lamps and music can be enjoyed in the open air? Certainly not Londoners; and, as for our country visitors, they have seen

everything dramatic worth seeing at their own homes, and have no desire to assist at plays of the second class. So, I repeat, there is certainly a *relâche*. Perhaps another cause for the annual *clôture* is the necessity of redecorations. In the days of the past playgoers did not care very much for marble and gold paint. If one's stall were bright with a clean antimacassar, it did not very much matter whether the hidden satin was new or old. But of late years every manager prides himself upon making his auditorium worthy of the tastes of a millionaire. So when August approaches the Theatre Royal This or That is closed to give the upholsterers a chance of running up bills of noble proportions. And why should we object? It is good for trade, and fills up the time of the close season pleasantly. When the evenings draw in, and the lamps are lighted at five or six o'clock, we return to our favourite theatres, and are charmed (for about three minutes) with the improvements. The manager feels that he has done his duty to his patrons, and has sacrificed his pecuniary interests to his generosity. Moreover, it may be just a trifle *infra dig.* to break the run of a London success with the production of a provincial stop-gap. Far better to close for decoration than to allow the scene of a triumph to be associated, for even a month or six weeks, with a company for whom no one cares, and a play at which no one desires to assist. I cannot say how the east-enders fare, but no doubt the theatres west of the docks keep open house at all times. If they do, so much the better for all parties. The "vac." of 'Arry and 'Arriet does not last for more than a fortnight, so practically Shoreditch and Whitechapel have always an audience ready for and desirous of being amused. The "Upper Million" pride themselves upon absence from Town, and patronise the drama of the Continent and the English seaside. Speaking personally, when I am gathering health beside the waves I invariably patronise the local playhouse. The town hall with its "fit up" is ever an attraction. The stalls at three and two shillings and the gallery at a lesser price are always full. It matters little what the entertainment may be—either a London success played by a third-rate touring company, or something original by a local genius—it is equally a welcome distraction. The other day I happened to be outside the stage door of a provincial theatre where a melodrama was to be given for the first time. The crowd assembled in my neighbourhood was certainly not composed of many dukes. "Look you here," said an official, "our terms are a pint of beer a night. Now I want some supers for guests at the count's ball. So come and give me your

names. But mind, I'll take the gents with collars first." This is scarcely the style in which things are done at the west-end, but no doubt those I may term "the sartorial superiors" were entirely satisfactory when they put in an appearance at night.

In conclusion, blank play bills are better than empty benches. This is a view that will find favour in the eyes of the managers. If there are empty benches it is a proof that playgoers consider that the house should be closed. Well and good. Then there is one portion of the customary audience that rejoices over the *relâche* without the slightest reservation. I refer to the newspaper critics. These worthy scribes can secure a holiday when "nothing is moving save stagnation." So it comes to pass that Slate of the *Twinkler*, and Butter of the *Daily Transmitter* leave Fleet-street for pastures new. They revel in the thousand delights of the country. Then when they return to London they pay the expenses of the outing by contributing an article to their organs, not upon things Thespian, but about rural recreations. It may be that at these times they learn to be genial. At any rate they cannot abuse the actors, and if they say severe things about the ducks and the drakes, their diatribes have no power to disturb the peace of the poultry yard. So it seems to be good for everyone that London should have its *relâche*.

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MISS IRENE VANBRUGH.

Portraits.

MISS IRENE VANBRUGH

IS one of a clever and charming quartette of sisters, daughters of a well-known Church dignitary, the late Prebendary Barnes. The eldest, Miss Violet Vanbrugh (Mrs. Arthur Bourchier), is among our few actresses who possess real emotional power, and who have a sense of humour as well. The next sister is the wife of Mr. Hugh Barnes, C.B., who holds a high official position in India. Miss Angela Vanbrugh is a violinist of more than promise, since she has already justified the high opinions formed as to her future career when she was yet a mere child. Miss Irene has shown that she has a talent surpassed on our stage by no young player for that kind of comedy which one associates with the adjectives sprightly and arch. In *Kitty Clive*, in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and in *The Chili Widow*, Miss Vanbrugh's acting was full of charm and gaiety, showing those fascinating attributes which make *La Locandiera* of Signora Duse so thoroughly delightful a performance. It was thus quite fitting, when, a few months ago, an English version of this piece was tried, that Miss Vanbrugh should be selected for the part of the irresistible innkeeper, and had the adaptation been less inept she would have won in it even more distinction than she did. She learnt the rudiments of her art with Miss Thorne at Margate, after a first appearance in 1888 in the children's production of *Alice in Wonderland;* but no training could have imparted the gifts that so quickly gained for her a leading place in the favour of the playgoing world. With Mr. Toole, whose company she joined on leaving Miss Thorne, she went to Australia, and remained with him until after the production of *Walker, London*, in which she created the part of the girl-student. At the Haymarket, with Mr. Tree, she made, perhaps, her most successful essay in Mr. Zangwill's clever little piece *Six Persons*. At the St. James's she was in the cast of *The Masqueraders*, and lent a pleasing touch of humour to *Guy Domvile*, besides helping so materially to make *The Importance of Being Earnest* a success. For the past two years she has been, with the exception of an appearance in the short-lived *Belle Belair* at the Avenue, attached to Mr. Bourchier's company, with which she toured in America last winter. As her talents mature and her experience widens Miss Irene Vanbrugh may quite reasonably be expected to secure an enduring place on the stage.

At the Play.

IN LONDON.

THE most interesting feature of the past month has been the appearance of three foreign actresses of the calibre of Madame Bernhardt, Madame Réjane, and Madame Odilon. The Jubilee festivities have interfered sadly with business, and the year, or so much of it as is past, will certainly, with one or two exceptions, not rank among those remarkable for prosperity. It is to be hoped, and indeed expected, however, that autumn will bring about an improved state of things, and that managers will then benefit by the renewal of interest which playgoers are likely to exhibit in theatrical entertainments.

Madame Odilon at Daly's.

Almost unheralded save by an occasional paragraph here and there, Madame Odilon appeared at Daly's Theatre on the afternoon of Monday, June 28. The circumstance is certainly worthy of emphatic record, inasmuch as it brought before the London public for the first time an actress of marvellous comic powers, extraordinary grace, and keen sensibility. Madame Odilon is, in short, a consummate *comédienne*, and an artist of the first order. If it were imperative to assign her to some recognised class, we should be disposed to say that she is of the school of Duse, although, we hasten to add, she owes little or nothing to the example of the great Italian actress. As a matter of fact, Madame Odilon possesses a distinctly original style, which experience has aided her to bring to a high state of perfection. Nature, moreover, has dealt generously with her, for she is as pretty as she is graceful. Her power of facial display is wonderful; she can express fear by a look, or pleasure by a smile, and more convincingly than by words in either instance. When she appears the stage is filled with her presence; the contagious influence of her bright manner is simply irresistible. In Vienna, as leading lady of the Volks Theatre company, Madame Odilon holds a high position, and, as she speaks English both fluently and well, it is permissible to hope that the success achieved by her in the Austrian capital may at some not very

distant date be repeated in London. For, unhappily, there is no gainsaying the fact that our public takes little or no interest in German plays, although they are always ready to flock to performances in French. Curiously enough, also, there seems only the slightest inclination among Germans resident in London to support their compatriots in such cases. To obtain, therefore, anything like the popularity which she richly deserves, Madame Odilon must necessarily appeal to English audiences in their own language.

Nevertheless, even as seen through a foreign medium, there need be no hesitation in describing Madame Odilon as a really great actress. Her true *métier* is, of course, comedy, and in this she excels. We can well imagine that as Madame Sans-Gêne she is superb; nor have we any difficulty in believing that her Katherine, in *The Taming of the Shrew*, bears comparison with that of any of the famous representatives of the character past or present. Unfortunately, the London public has not on the present occasion been privileged to see Madame Odilon in either of these parts. Her engagement, indeed, has been all too short, although during it she has contrived to appear in three pieces. Of those, the first, entitled *Untreu*, a modern comedy, by Signor Robert Braccho, unquestionably shows her to the greatest advantage. The play itself is little more than a drawing-room entertainment, the entire action being carried on by three persons only; but it is an ingenious piece of workmanship, and written with considerable skill. In it Madame Odilon appears as a neglected wife, who, to regain her husband's love, accepts the invitation of an empty-headed fop to visit his chambers, and in this way succeeds, not only in heaping ridicule upon her foolish admirer, but also in bringing back her husband's wandering affections. The thing is of gossamer slightness, but it suffices, at any rate, to show the amazing charm, vivacity, and magnetic force possessed by Madame Odilon. Unqualified praise is also due to Herren Christians and Nhil, who respectively sustained the parts of the husband and the fop to perfection. *Die Goldene Eva* and *Renaissance*, in both of which Madame Odilon appeared subsequently, are both a trifle old-fashioned in form and substance; but, so wonderful is the new-comer's talent, one is almost tempted to forget all other considerations while she is on the stage.

Madame Rejane at the Lyric.

The appearance of Madame Réjane at the Lyric Theatre on Monday, June 28th, in M. Maurice Donnay's latest piece, *La*

Douleureuse, once more raises the question of Mr. G. A. Redford's responsibility *vis-à-vis* of the playgoing public. We may, of course, be entirely mistaken—Mr. Redford will doubtless correct us if we are—but we have always been under the impression that among the duties of Mr. Redford's office was that of forbidding the performance on the stage of any piece likely to offend against public morals. In our last number we even went so far as to congratulate Mr. Redford on his courage in refusing to license *Le Fiacre 117*. Alas for our confidence in him, it would appear we spoke too soon. Or perhaps it is that Mr. Redford possesses two sorts of courage; one for the minor theatres and another for the more important. Otherwise, by what possible process of reasoning—Mr. Redford, we hope, will not take it amiss that we credit him with a certain measure of logical power—does he permit *La Douleureuse* to be played at the Lyric and prohibit *Le Fiacre 117* from being performed at the Royalty? If one play is more indecent than the other, we frankly confess our inability to say which it is. Mr. Redford evidently knows, but, unfortunately, it is not easy to make him speak. For our own part, we should feel genuinely grateful to him if only he would make clear to us the motives that led him to an opposite conclusion in each instance. Let him be assured, we are by no means of an exacting turn of mind. All we desire to know and to understand is the nature of the arrangement upon which he acts. For, we take it, he is much too serious and conscientious a person to be swayed by anything so petty as mere caprice or by considerations other than those springing from a high sense of duty. But where, we are compelled to ask, does he draw the line which in his view appears to separate Shaftesbury-avenue from Dean-street?

We have no wish to suggest that M. Donnay is not a very clever man. But in writing *La Douleureuse* he has certainly put his cleverness to the worst possible use. Adultery is the theme of his play, nor does the fact that it points the moral *qui casse paie* render the subject any the more pleasing. In his search after truth M. Donnay, moreover, is led into numberless byeways, overrun with weeds and heavy with mud. To listen to him one might think that the sole occupation and only thought of every married or unmarried man is how most easily to tempt his dearest friend's wife from the paths of virtue, and to lure her into wrong-doing. Nor does he at all mince matters when it suits his purpose to discuss the absorbing topic of spades. These are no longer disguised under the charming periphrasis of "agricultural imple-

ments." In all their naked shamedness they are presented to the spectator as genuine and unmistakable spades. We doubt, indeed, whether anything more brutally outspoken or more cynically suggestive has ever been heard on the stage than some of the dialogue which M. Donnay has provided in the first two acts of *La Douleureuse*.

We, unlike Mr. Redford, have too much respect for our readers to give the plot of this revolting play in detail. Enough that it deals with the story of a certain Philippe Lamberthie and Hélène Ardan, who, lovers before the death of the latter's husband, presently find themselves in a position to become husband and wife. Shortly before their marriage, however, Philippe discovers that Hélène's former husband was not the father of her child—that she has had, in short, a lover before himself. Somewhat unreasonably, he turns furiously upon her and upbraids her with her perfidy. But, as it happens, he has himself not been too scrupulous in regard to a certain Madame des Trembles, Hélène's closest acquaintance and a married woman. Hélène guesses the truth, and from the position of accuser Philippe is relegated to that of accused. The scene in which all this takes place is, we hasten to admit, a masterly one, and plainly shows that M. Donnay possesses a true dramatic instinct which, relieved of its unwholesome tendencies, ought to carry him far. In the end, the two guilty and unsavoury creatures decide that there is nothing left for them but marriage, although conscious that all pretence at confidence in each other is gone for ever. As Hélène, Madame Réjane created a great effect by the force, the subtlety, and the originality of her acting. An excellent company, headed by M. Calmettes, M. Magnier, and Mlle. Sorel, gave her admirable support. Later she was seen as Madame Sans-Gêne, a superb performance, although perhaps beginning to suffer a little from over-emphasis, and as Frou-Frou, a character which stands entirely outside her powers.

The Silver Key.

A Comedy in Four Acts, by Sydney Grundy, adapted from Alexandre Dumas' play "Mlle: de Belle-Isle." Produced at Her Majesty's Theatre, July 10.

Duc de Richelieu .. .. Mr. Tree	Lackeys
Chevalier d'Aubigny .. Mr. Lewis Waller	Mr. Gayer Mackay and Mr. S. A. Cookson
Duc d'Aumont .. .. Mr. Charles Allan	Marquise de Prie .. .. .. Mrs. Tree
Chevalier d'Auvray .. Mr. Lionel Brough	Mariette .. .. .. Miss Gigia Filippi
Chamillac .. Mr. Gerald Du Maurier	Mlle. de Belle-Isle .. Miss Evelyn Millard
Germain .. .. Mr. Coe	

Mr. Sydney Grundy pursues his researches among the half-forgotten tomes of French dramatic literature. No one indeed has displayed so much energy in this direction as he since the bad old days when every Parisian success was regarded

by English hack-writers as their own unlawful property and particular prey. Frankly, we feel constrained to declare that this falling away on Mr. Grundy's part from the higher paths of original work inspires us with anything but a feeling of satisfaction. For the evil springing from the proceeding is two-fold. It robs us, in the first place, of the results of Mr. Grundy's unaided talents; and, in the second, it bars the way to the production of original plays by other native dramatists. Mr. Grundy, we are happy to say, has reached the enviable position in which labour has ceased to be a matter of necessity, and it is consequently the more incumbent on him to leave adaptations and translations to those who are incapable of accomplishing anything better. While we do not seek to exclude foreign masterpieces altogether from our stage, we certainly contend that the first and chief use to which it should be put is the fostering of such original dramatic talent as exists among us.

Mlle. de Belle-Isle, although in some respects an effective play, can hardly be described as a good one. It sufficiently served its purpose, however, half a century ago, and might well have been permitted to rest upon the reputation it then made for itself. Even under the magical hand of Mr. Grundy it remains old-fashioned and antiquated, and strikes one as excessively artificial and theatrical. One genuinely moving scene it contains, but only one. The rest is merely leather and prunella. Of the story unfolded in it there is no need to speak. The piece has been adapted into English more than once, and its plot consequently is tolerably well known. What changes Mr. Grundy has effected are not in our judgment an improvement. In attempting to render more natural the character of the intrigue he has only succeeded in making it less interesting. To speak quite candidly, we prefer Alexandre Dumas with all his faults. to Mr. Grundy with all his virtues. As a spectacle the production, on the other hand, is worthy of the greatest praise. The piece, indeed, could not have been mounted with greater taste or a finer regard for accuracy. The acting, also, if not exactly perfect, is at any rate highly satisfactory. Mr. Tree possesses in large measure the grace and elegance required to impersonate Richelieu, himself the recognised type of all that was graceful and elegant. The hypercritical might perhaps object that his conception of the part is a trifle too sentimental and lacking in cynical humour, but that possibly is more the fault of the author than the actor. Mrs. Tree gives a vivacious and clever sketch of the Marquise de Prie, the haughty insolence of

whose manner she does not, however, sufficiently emphasize. Mr. Lewis Waller and Miss Evelyn Millard are equally admirable in the parts of respectively the Chevalier d'Aubigny and Mlle. de Belle-Isle.

Spiritisme.

A Comedy, in Three Acts, by Victorien Sardou. Produced at the Adelphi Theatre, July 6.

Simone	Mme. Sarah Bernhardt	Valentin	M. Lefrancais
Thécla	Mme. Canti	Marescot	M. Angelo
Gilberte	Mme. Seylor	Parisot	M. Laroche
D'Aubenas	M. Brémont	Stoudza	M. Deneubourg

Apart from Alfred de Musset's *Lorenzaccio*, Victorien Sardou's *Spiritisme* is the only novelty which Madame Bernhardt has presented during her London engagement this season. The piece has proved successful neither in Paris nor in America, and, to tell the truth, is but a poor specimen of its prolific author's workmanship. The second act, nevertheless, affords the great French actress a notable opportunity for the display of her talents, although so little interested is the spectator in the fate of hero or heroine that the success achieved is wholly and solely an acting one. As the plot has already been described by our Paris correspondent, there is no need to go over the ground again. The story, it may be enough to say, is tedious in parts, and preposterous in others. M. Sardou starts with an elaborate exposition of the theory of Spiritualism, the *pros* and *cons* of which are argued on the stage at great length, even to the verge of weariness. But the discussion ends in nothing, so far at any rate as the real action of the play is concerned, and might just as well have been dispensed with altogether. Apparently conscious of the inherent weakness of the piece, Madame Bernhardt attempted to balance matters by a performance more than usually forcible whenever the occasion admitted of it. But all her efforts could not possibly galvanize into life a piece so inherently feeble and tedious. The only other feature of interest was the acting of M. Brémont as the conventional "deceived husband" of the French stage.

The Man of Destiny.

A Play, in One Act, by George Bernard Shaw. Produced at the Grand Theatre, Croydon, July 1.

Napoleon Bonaparte	Mr. Murray Carson	Giuseppe	Mr. Horace Hodges
A Sub-Lieutenant	Mr. E. H. Kelly	The Strange Lady	Miss Florence West

The Man of Destiny is less a play than a simple medium for the airing of the author's well-known opinions relative to Socialism, political economy, the aggrandisement of England, and other cognate matters. Its hero is nominally General Bonaparte, but in reality a frothy orator such as may be discovered any fine Sunday afternoon delivering windy arguments

beneath the Reformers' tree in Hyde Park. Seriously to criticise a piece of the kind would be consequently a waste of time and space. Mr. Shaw, in truth, pays very little heed to his story, allowing it to unfold itself as best it may amid a tangled network of superfluous verbiage. That there is real cleverness to be found in the dialogue we do not deny, but it is a kind of cleverness ill-suited to the purposes of the stage. The plot, like that of Sardou's *Les Pattes de Mouche*, is concerned with a letter concealed in a packet of papers, which a certain "strange lady" is anxious to secure before the bundle falls into the hands of Bonaparte. Like two cats after one mouse, the couple play out their game of catch-who-can. Mr. Shaw reveals a certain measure of ingenious resource in the conduct of his intrigue, but the interest of this latter is materially lessened by the inordinate length to which it is drawn out. Mr. Murray Carson furnished an admirable portrait of Napoleon, whose appearance nature has given him the means to reproduce with rare fidelity, while Miss Florence West proved a lively representative of the "strange lady."

Four Little Girls.

A Farce, in Three Acts, by Walter Stokes Craven. Produced at the Criterion Theatre, July 17.

Jakel Muggeridge, M.A.	..Mr. James Welch	Mrs. Middleage	.. Miss Emily Miller
Robert Raddlestone ..	.. Mr. J. H. Barnes	Lillie Raddlestone	.. Miss Violet Lyster
Thomas Tyndal ..	..Mr. W. Blakeley	Florence Tyndal	.. Miss Mabel Beardsley
Dick Raddlestone ..	Mr. Richard Lambart	Polly Humbleton	.. ..Miss Dora Barton
Percy Tyndal	Mr. Kenneth Douglas	Ethel Middleage	.. ..Miss Audrey Ford
Mrs. Humbleton ..	..Miss M. A. Victor	Charlotte ..	Miss Sydney Fairbrother

The concluding days of the season are seldom fruitful of anything particularly striking in the way of novelties, and certainly the production of *Four Little Girls* is not calculated to reverse the ordinary course of events. Mr. Walter Stokes Craven's farce is, to be frank, a very ordinary piece. The author has apparently taken *Our Boys* and *Betsy* as his models, but while incorporating into his work much that rightly belongs to these pieces he has failed to make serviceable use of the material. His humour is of the most elementary description, although occasionally a really happy line may be detected in the dialogue, while the intrigue is drawn out to such intolerable length as to become oppressively tedious. By duplicating well-nigh all his characters and most of his incidents, the author, in addition, produces in his audience a sense of repetition that ends by seriously trying its patience. For no sooner has one couple finished a scene than another strolls on to enact another of a precisely similar description. Of boisterous horseplay there is no lack in the new farce, but of anything approaching subtlety of wit or originality hardly a trace. Altogether *Four Little Girls*

must be pronounced a rather commonplace, prolix, and attenuated affair, with here and there a bright spot to relieve the monotony. The story relates to the doings of a pair of middle-class widowers who determine to marry their housekeepers provided their sons agree to espouse the daughters of these ladies. But, as the event proves, Dick Raddlestone and Percy Tyndal have already taken unto themselves wives without acquainting their parents with the fact. When, therefore, these latter unexpectedly appear in their sons' apartments there is nothing for it but to introduce the girls, separately and at different times, as wedded to Mr. Muggeridge, the young fellows' tutor. Dick and Percy are speedily carried off by their respective parents in order to be presented to their proposed *fiancées*, and as the real wives promptly follow their lords and masters the result may be imagined. Nor is it difficult to conceive how, by the exercise of a little ingenuity, the author contrives at last to straighten out matters. The best acting during the evening came from Mr. J. H. Barnes and Mr. W. Blakeley, who, as the bewildered fathers, proved exceedingly amusing. As Muggeridge, the tutor, Mr. James Welch gave a fairly droll performance, although his success would have been distinctly greater had he kept his efforts within reasonable bounds. In the part of Charlotte, a maid-of-all-work, Miss Sydney Fairbrother again showed herself to be incomparable, while Misses M. A. Victor and Emily Miller were conventionally amusing as the two elderly housekeepers. Of the various young people in the cast we regret we cannot say anything favourable. Possibly experience may bring an improvement in their methods, but at the present moment they obviously possess few of the qualifications required for handling farcical work.

IN PARIS.

Although the record of the past month has been a somewhat barren one, it has been marked by one important event—the inauguration of the théâtre feministe. The opening performance took place at the Menus Plaisirs, the piece being *Hors du Mariage*, a drama in three acts, by Madame Daniel Lesueur—a drama written by a woman, on a subject most vital to a woman, and put on the stage by a woman! This is certainly a noticeable and out-of-the-way thing in theatrical records, and we expected to witness something very new indeed. We were prepared to receive some startling lesson in morals, or to be dazzled by a novel light thrown on an old question—the light of the woman's

intellect. We were ready to be submissive, receptive, humble and teachable. But, as we listened, we found that we had heard it all before. We must even go further, and say we had heard it all before rather better put. But we would not be misunderstood. The play is well constructed, it is even masterly in parts; we admire it as a work of art, only—it is not startlingly original. It is not really original at all: as it proceeded, reminiscences swept over our minds of many former plays—of *Les Irréguliers*, of *La Loi de l'Homme*, and a hundred others. It was all excellent, but we had expected something quite different; we had expected too much.

The Œuvre gave as its final representation for the year the *Comédie de l'Amour*, by Ibsen. This piece, one of the very earliest of its author's works, and hitherto unnoticed, is very picturesque in the strong contrast it presents between the bourgeois respectability of the middle-class boarding-house where the scene is laid, and the highly-exalted, overstrung idealism and libertinage of the somewhat "stuck-up" young hero, Falk. Effect and cause are put before us cleverly, side by side; here, as in real life, the social revolutionist springs, not from among the Bohemians or the lawless, as might be expected, but from the very stronghold of law, order, and humdrum. An idyll is the core of the play, and it moves the audience to sympathy and interest. M. Rameau played the difficult part of Falk very cleverly; M. Gémier made an admirable Straamaud; and Mme. Susanne Auclaire as Swanhild was deservedly applauded.

IN BERLIN.

Here, as in every other city at this time of the year, the record is principally of closing houses and of more or less vague rumours concerning the future. Only two theatres have presented novelties worthy of more than passing notice, the first of these being the Opera House, where Signor Puccini's much-paragraphed *Die Bohème* has been produced. The score is curiously uneven, airs of considerable beauty being alternated with things very much the reverse. The libretto is an adaptation by Herren Giacosa Mica and Hartman of *La Vie de Bohème*. Herr Naval in the principal part acted and sang with all his usual success. Frau Herzog seemed to be too good an artist for the part of the heroine, on which the composer seems to have spent far too little time. The other interpreters, numbering Herr Bachmann and Herr Hoffmann among them, did the composer all possible credit.

Herr A. Von Gersdoff's successful novel *Verkanflicher Werth* has been dramatised by Herr Falke. This work has been produced at the Alexander Platz Theater, and has been received with an enthusiasm often not given to much better works. The play follows closely on the lines of the novel, which betrays its nationality in every character and every situation. A young Count, to save himself from debt and exposure, is induced to marry a wealthy girl and to forget her to whom he had previously given his heart. He hates himself for what he has done, the more especially that on his wife's side the marriage has been really one of inclination. A typical villain—who is, of course, one of the Count's creditors—tries to persuade the wife to leave her indifferent spouse, but with no success. The husband has gone back to his habits of gambling, and the money his wife has brought him is soon spent. He then embezzles the funds of his regiment, a matter that comes to the knowledge of his wife, who goes to her lover and promises that if he will find the necessary sum to save her husband from disgrace, she will consent to a divorce. The offer is accepted, but when the creditor comes to business, the Count, as one may have anticipated, realises the sacrifice that his wife is prepared to make, and rejects the offer with contumely. Going to his wife he tells her—for the first time—that he loves her, and the story ends by the Colonel of the Count's regiment advancing the money to save the young man from degradation. Herr Wendt played the hero acceptably, but with a too obvious leaning to the theory of "reserved force," and Herr Mollendorf, as the villain, scored at least equal honours. Frau Griep, as the wife, had an excellent part, teeming with opportunities, all of which were used with an artistic discretion rare among German actresses.

IN VIENNA.

The period of summer somnolence in things theatrical set in here with the month of June, and nearly every theatre in the capital has borne for some weeks an intimation externally that it is closed for a considerable period, while some bear evidence internally that the decorator has found his chance and is making the most of it. Only two, indeed, have had the hardihood to remain steadily open, but even these have not ventured upon anything of a noteworthy character. The Imperial Opera House has been producing a number of well-tried favourites from its extensive stock of operatic successes, and the Jantsch Theater,

its only rival at present, has, for the most part, confined itself to performances of equally well-established dramas and comedies. The one new production which it ventured upon was not encouraging. It was a farce by Herr F. Anthony, entitled *100,000 Kronen*, and, though it contained an element of the comic, it contained at the same time a preponderating degree of the nonsensical.

IN ITALIAN CITIES.

From the point of view of a seeker after novelties, there has been almost a general stagnation throughout Italy for some weeks past. *Il Prodigio*, a drama by Signor Baffico, the author of the romance *Nelle Tenebre*, saw the light at the Costanzi, Rome, with Signora Tina di Lorenzo and Signor Flavio Ando in the leading parts, and achieved a fair success. The first performance of *Nunziella*, by Signor Alfonso Miglio and Signor Giovanni Vaccari, took place at Bassano, and made a very favourable impression, the last two of the three acts being well charged with dramatic vigour.

IN MADRID.

There is very little to be recorded this month with regard to additions to Madrid's dramatic annals. The new matter at all worthy of note is, indeed, confined to a by no means stupendous work by Señores Carrion and Chueca, which bears the title *Agua, Azucarillos y Aguardiente*. The performance, it is true, aroused a good deal of enthusiasm among the audience, but for all that the plot and its accompaniments were of the lightest character. The fact that it reproduced a good many Madrid street scenes and characters of a lowly order had, doubtless, a great deal to do with the sympathy with which it was received.

IN NEW YORK.

Nothing has to be added to what was recorded last month. The attractions then described still maintain their popularity, with the exception of *A Round of Pleasure*, which, though by no means bad, could hardly withstand comparison with *The Whirl of the Town*. The latter has now passed its sixtieth performance. At the Herald Square Theatre *The Girl from Paris* is nearing its three hundredth performance, while at the Empire *Under the Red Robe*, the only survivor of the scores of dramas produced here this year, shows no sign of diminishing public favour.

Echoes from the Green Room.

THE Diamond Jubilee was not ignored by the London theatres. Many of them were illuminated, the Lyceum making a particularly effective display for several nights. The Colonial Premiers were frequently entertained at supper behind scenes, and Sir Henry Irving, in addition to setting the example, gave a special performance of *A Story of Waterloo* and *The Bells* to the Colonial and Indian troops. The audience on the last of these occasions, with their varied costumes, was eminently picturesque. Sir Henry Irving, in response to enthusiastic calls, made a brief speech. "Ladies and gentlemen—no, I won't say ladies and gentlemen; if you will let me I will say my dear comrades, for our meeting to-day proves we are comrades one and all—I cannot tell you how much I value the delight, and honour, and privilege, and pride of making you welcome here to-day. I hope that, centuries hence, our children will hold very dear to them the spirit which gives us the opportunity of meeting here—that spirit of love to our Queen, and our country, to that great nation which you typify as the strength, and glory, and power of it, and to that sweet, and gracious, and kindly Queen for whom your swords will flash and our hearts will pray."

THE Lyceum season came to a close on July 23, when Sir Henry Irving made several interesting announcements. Returning in December from a provincial tour, he will produce a play by his second son on the subject of Peter the Great, and then a play by Mr. H. D. Traill and Mr. Robert Hichins. During Sir Henry's absence the Lyceum is to be occupied by Mr. Forbes Robertson, who will then appear for the first time as Hamlet.

THE garden party held by the Queen at Buckingham Palace on June 28, the anniversary of her Coronation, was, perhaps, the most imposing occasion of the kind on record. Gathered round Her Majesty was the flower of English society, intellectual and social. Among the many hundreds invited were Sir Henry Irving, Miss Ellen Terry, Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft, Mr. and Mrs. Wyndham, Mr. Forbes Robertson, Mr. and Mrs. Tree, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander, Mr. and Mrs. Hare, Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Kendal Grimston, Mr. George Grossmith, Mr. D'Oyly Carte, and Miss Mary Moore.

AMONG the Queen's guests at Windsor last month was Sir Arthur Sullivan, for whose work her Majesty, always a lover of music, evinces a decided taste.

THERE was a most representative gathering at the Mansion House on July 12. The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress received at luncheon many

votaries of the Drama, including Sir Henry Irving, Mme. Sarah Bernhardt, Mme. Réjane, M. Porel, Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft, Mr. and Mrs. Tree, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander, Mr. and Mrs. John Hare, Mr. and Mrs. Cyril Maude, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Terry, Mr. and Mrs. George Grossmith, Mr. and Mrs. Pinero, Mr. Sydney Grundy, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Henry Neville Mrs. Arthur Lewis, Miss Phyllis Broughton, Miss Mary Moore, Miss Evelyn Millard, Miss Beatrice Lamb, Miss Carlotta Addison, Miss Rose Leclercq, Mr. and Mrs. Clement Scott, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Bourchier, Mr. and Mrs. H. B. Irving, Miss Millward, Miss Marie Tempest, Mr. Willard, Mr. Forbes Robertson, Miss Kate Rorke, Mr. William Terriss, Mr. Charles Hawtrey, Miss Olga Nethersole, Miss Rosina Brandram, Mr. Laurence Irving, and Miss Decima Moore.

There was a special performance at the Lyceum on July 15 for the members of the International Literary Conference. *The Merchant of Venice* was the play, with Sir Henry Irving as Shylock, and Miss Terry, happily recovered from a temporary illness, as Portia.

Mr. Alexander is holiday-making in Germany.

Mr. Tree is expected to appear at the Renaissance next winter, Mme. Bernhardt meanwhile occupying Her Majesty's Theatre.

Mme. Bernhardt has accepted a play by Mr. Julian Field, and is likely to produce it in the autumn.

Accounts of Signora Duse's triumphs in Paris continue to reach us. On her first night, we are told, "she looked awfully nervous on entering, but soon forgot everything except that she was Marguerite Gautier. Her greatest sensations were, first in the fainting scene, when a well-known actress cried out: 'Heavens! she has fainted in reality!'—a greater tribute than which could not have been rendered to Duse's acting. The next great sensation was when she refused Armand's love, then at the gift of the camelia. Mme. Bernhardt, who was present, cried out, 'Brava!' and seemed as excited as the rest. The whole public was on foot, and the Italians present were delirious with joy. All who could forget that Duse is not French say that she is the greatest artist of the day. All critics, even the least enthusiastic, say that her face is so expressive that there is no need to understand her language. You can follow her, word by word, through her eyes."

It may not be generally known that Signora Duse was born in a railway carriage. She was always a nervous, restless child. It is not to be wondered at, her father used to say, "she has got the war of 1859 inside her!" Her father was an actor. She began acting at four years of age, as Cosetta in *Les Misérables*.

Mme. Duse was entertained at luncheon on July 6 at a restaurant in the Bois de Boulogne by the entire company of the Comédie Française. M. Mounet-Sully took the chair, and, in proposing the toast of the day, delivered a characteristic address. "You are soon to leave us," he said, "to recover your strength in contact with your native land under the enchanting sky of that beautiful Italy which we always love. Do not forget us too much. We shall constantly preserve your memory here, and when you return you will find the same word on our lips—thank you and welcome. You are at home. I drink your health, Madame. I drink to the realisation of your dreams, or rather—for a dream realised has already lost the better

part of its charm—I drink to the continuation of your dreams, and to that divine faculty which you possess of living them in art without distorting them, and of renewing them by commencing them again and again."

MME. NORDICA, who has been lying seriously ill at the Savoy Hotel, has placed her professional affairs in the hands of Colonel Henry Mapleson, and, acting on his advice, will sue the Royal Opera syndicate, of which Mr. Maurice Grau is managing director, for her salary, amounting to about £10,000, as well as for damages to her reputation as an artist. She bases the latter claim upon the fact that she does not sing at Covent Garden during the present opera season.

MME. REJANE is expected to appear at the Lessing Theater, Berlin, in October.

MME. MODJESKA reappeared on the stage in California towards the end of June.

YET another sign of the wiser feeling of the Church towards the Stage. The Dean of Canterbury has given Mr. Chillingham Hunt permission to dramatize his *Darkness and Dawn*, in which Nero is the principal figure.

THE circumstances in which Jenny Lind first became famous in America are related in a German paper. Goldschmidt, her accompanist, whose wife she was to become, went to America to seek his fortune, but with ill success. One day he met Barnum, who for some time had been very unlucky. Goldschmidt remarked that he knew a singer in England who might do well in America. "A singer? Bah! What's her name?" "Jenny Lind." "That's no name." "But she's the greatest singer in England." "Good thing for her; but we'll talk about something else." After a while Goldschmidt returned to the attack. "For God's sake," Barnum broke in impatiently, "leave me in peace. We have as many singers as there are sands on the seashore." "Pity," said Goldschmidt; "perhaps, after all, something might be done with the Swedish Nightingale." Barnum leapt to his feet. "What is she called?" "The Swedish Nightingale." "The Swedish Nightingale? Send at once to Miss Lind. I will engage her for one hundred concerts; $50,000 down, free voyage, and living for three persons. At once!" "But, my dear friend, you haven't heard her!" "Heard her! What the deuce do I know about music? Swedish Nightingale! Immense! And you have waited till now before telling me!" And the thing was done.

AMONG the many adaptations that have been made before Mr. Grundy's of *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle* was one called *The Duke's Boast*, written by Mr. H. O. Buckle, a brother of the Editor of *The Times*. This was seen at an Avenue Theatre matinée in 1889, with Miss Marion Terry and Mr. Fred Terry in the principal parts.

MR. GLADSTONE as a stage-struck youth is a little too much for the imagination. Yet the story has been going the round of certain easily-duped journals that in his youth he felt the fascination of the footlights, and consulted Macready as to the best means of obtaining a footing on the boards. Mr. Herbert Gladstone, consulted on the subject, declares that there is no truth in the assertion. But it is interesting to see that he appears to think there may be some foundation for the other story—that Mr. Gladstone at an early age wrote a play on the subject of the retreat of the Ten Thousand. The task of dramatising Xenophon has

not been attempted, even by Mr. Wilson Barrett. The result of the "inquiries" which Mr. Herbert Gladstone has promised to make will be awaited with curiosity.

THE "Waterloo Drama" at the Adelphi, which is likely to be seen during August, will have a decidedly strong cast, including Miss Marion Terry (who has been too long "resting"), Miss Millward, Mr. William Terriss (after his short absence at the Haymarket), Mr. Harry Nicholls, Mr. Charles Cartwright, and Mr. J. D. Beveridge. The authors, Mr. Haddon Chambers and Mr. Comyns Carr, have made one of their principal scenes the historic ball given by the Duchess of Richmond at Brussels on the eve of Waterloo. Thackeray's graphic account of it, and of the scenes which followed, will be recalled to many minds by the "living picture" of the event which will be seen on the Adelphi boards.

MISS JULIA ARTHUR has returned to America.

THE late Mrs. Oliphant, by turns novelist, historian, and biographer, wrote too much to do herself full justice. Her monograph on Molière, in which she had the help of Canon Turner, is particularly defective. It is disfigured by curious errors both of omission and commission, as we pointed out at the time of its appearance. Here, as elsewhere, Mrs. Oliphant was not at the pains to read up her subject. According to her, it is "hopeless to attempt to trace" Molière's career as a strolling player. His lively *Amphitryon* is curtly passed over; *Psyché*, written in collaboration with Corneille and Quinault, is not mentioned at all. The somewhat angry spirit displayed in the *Critique de L'Ecole des Femmes* and *L'Impromptu de Versailles* is sternly censured, apparently out of ignorance of the fact that those works were written in reply to venomous personal attacks. But little is said of Molière's private character, and for any satisfactory information as to his personal appearance and his talents as an actor we must go to other books. Altogether, this contribution to "Foreign Classics for English Readers," like Mrs. Oliphant's *Sheridan* in the "English Men of Letters" series, is of no permanent value, although in parts she shows some true sagacity as a critic.

MR. SIDNEY LEE, the editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, contributes to the latest volume of that monumental work the much-expected article on Shakspere. He evidently has a wide acquaintance with the mass of literature connected with his subject. He gives, among other things, a full account of the Shaksperean genealogy, of the theatrical world in the poet's early days, of the steady growth of his fame, and, as far as possible, of his combination towards the end of "astute business transactions" and the production of the noblest of plays. Unlike Mr. Edgar Pemberton, he is not conscious that the newly-discovered portrait at Stratford-on-Avon was the original of the portrait in the First Folio. Illustrations of these pictures, which certainly bear a marked resemblance to each other, were, it may be remembered, given in *The Theatre* last year, together with an admirable and well-informed article by Mr. Pemberton respecting them.

Ibsen on his Merits, by Sir Edward Russell and Mr. P. C. Standing, is yet another tribute, less critical than enthusiastic, of the Norwegian dramatist. What Mr. Standing writes may be passed over; he is a blind idolater. It is otherwise with Sir Edward Russell, whose opinions command respect even when we dissent from them. He admits that the plays are morbid, but

asks why the art in them should be challenged if it is great. This, we think, is hardly conclusive. To borrow an illustration from *The Times*, one might use the same argument in the case of a painter like Wiertz, who had it in him to become a great artist, but whose morbid love of the horrible left him only with the reputation of a marvellously clever "eccentric."

In the infancy of the English drama, as we have all heard, plays were acted in the galleried inn-yards of London, the one most famous being the Belle Sauvage on Ludgate-hill. Not much less famous, however, was the Old Bell in Holborn, where the poets and wits of old could often be found. This has just been purchased by Mr. Fitch, surveyor, of Furnival's Inn, on an eighty years' lease, for £11,600.

It is suspected that the mental derangement which led Mr. Barney Barnato to commit suicide was due in some measure to an accident he met with during an amateur performance of *The Bells* at the Empire Theatre, Johannesburg, in 1894. He played Matthias, and between the acts, while hurrying upstairs to his dressing-room, he struck his head against a beam with such force as to make him insensible. After his apparent recovery, he said, "There is a jack loose in my head, and the mine may be flooded at any time." It is not the first time, our friend Mr. Stephen Fiske remarks, that a man has injured himself by attempting to imitate Sir Henry Irving.

The churchyard of St. James's, Pentonville, containing the remains of Charles Dibdin, whose nautical songs added to the popularity of more than one play, and Joey Grimaldi, the clown of Sadler's Wells Theatre, has been laid out as a public recreation ground.

Mr. Allen Beaumont, one of the best elocutionists on the London stage, lately gave at Steinway Hall, before a very large audience, an interesting dramatic recital, the chief features of which were selections from *Hamlet*. Mürger's *La Ballade du Désespéré*, the accompanying music to which was written by Bemberg, was also in the programme, Mr. Beaumont reciting in French the lines of the poor forlorn poet, while Miss Florence Oliver sang the melody of the Angel of Death, who "brings healing for all the ills of life." Mr. Beaumont's pure intonation was of great service in Longfellow's *King Robert of Sicily* and in other miscellaneous poems.

Nowadays, it seems, a play is not "rejected," but "returned to the author" by the actor-manager. The distinction is not very obvious. The Greeks to-day always describe their flights from the victorious Turks as "strategic movements to the rear."

Yet another suburban theatre. It is to be erected on the north side of Harrow-road, between Westbury-road and Ranelagh-road. The Paddington Vestry have approved the plans.

"Nature is looking up," said Mr. Whistler, when a gushing lady compared a glorious sunset to one of his pictures. "Shakspere is looking up," we may say in view of the increasing number of Shaksperean productions we note throughout the country. Of course Mr. F. R. Benson and Mr. Ben Greet do a good work in this respect year in and year out, and "there are others." In Edinburgh a "stock" Shaksperean season, with Miss Esmé and Miss Vera Beringer as the "stars," is to test the attractions of *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *As You Like It*.

Taken from the advertisement of the provincial tour of a particularly

thrilling melodrama: "A Strong Company and a Fine Plant of Printing." For a piece to rely upon its "posters," which is evidently the meaning of this strange phrase, is a curiosity we have not met with before stated so bluntly as this. *Secret Service* might be described as having a "fine plant of printing," considering the number and variety of the pictures with which it adorns the London hoardings. They are striking, certainly, and arrest the attention; but we cannot say we care very much for the style in which they are drawn. There is no grace in any of the figures, and the faces of the characters do but scant justice to their representatives.

Mr. Henry Arthur Jones has just published, through Messrs. Macmillan, *The Case of Rebellious Susan*. His new play is said to be written in much the same vein, and is at present known as *The Triflers*. It will be presented by Mr. Wyndham at the Criterion on his return to town, probably in September.

If Mr. Wilson Barrett had lived under the Napoleonic régime he would have probably found his religious dramas subjected to the censure which *le P'tit Caporal* exercised over plays as well as everything else. Among the hitherto unpublished letters of the Emperor, which are now being given to the world, is one to the Prefect of Police, in which Napoleon says, with reference to a play called *The Death of Abel*, "I do not approve of subjects from Holy Scripture being set upon the stage. These subjects should be left to the Church. The Chamberlain had better say this to play-writers, in order that they may look out for other subjects."

Miss Alice Lingard, so successful in *Called Back*, died in June. In England, as in America and Australia, she will be greatly missed. One of her favourite parts was Camille in *La Dame aux Camélias*.

Mr. Charles Hudson, of Mr. Wilson Barrett's company, died last month at an early age. He bore some resemblance to Sir Henry Irving, whose style he had the questionable taste to burlesque in *Claudian*.

Tristan et Leonnois, by M. Silvestre, is to be produced at the Comédie Française in October.

The French drama has suffered a great loss in M. Henri Meilhac, who died in Paris on July 6th. Born in 1831, he took first to bookselling, then to caricature, and long afterwards, in conjunction with M. Halévy, produced such memorable pieces as *Frou-Frou*, *La Perichole*, *Les Brigands*, *Tricoche et Cacolet*, *Le Roi Candaule*, *La Petite Marquise*, *Toto chez Tata*, *Carmen*, *Le Petit Duc*, and *Le Mari de la Debutante*. By himself he wrote excellent plays, all showing wit, humour, and shrewd observation. We shall speak again of him, and that before long.

Secret Service is being adapted to the Paris stage by M. Pierre Decourcelle, one of the authors of *Les Deux Gosses*.

Mme. Bernhardt has written a letter in reply to one from M. Guistane Guiches, in which he complained that she had prematurely withdrawn his play, *Snobs*, from the boards at the Renaissance and substituted *La Samaritaine*. The average nightly receipts of *Snobs*, it appears, amounted to only 2904 francs, while the expenses were 2896 francs. The receipts of *La Samaritaine* were 9000 francs on a night when those of *Snobs* was only 1200 francs. "See how fairly I have dealt with him," says Mme. Bernhardt. "If I had studied my own interests I should have at once withdrawn *Snobs* and played *La Samaritaine*, which proved an unprecedented success. But

I have not done so. I have adhered to my principles. In a subsidised theatre it is not difficult to continue a play that is losing money. The taxpayers make good the deficit. But at the Renaissance I alone am responsible ; and, however fond I am of my authors, I cannot afford to lose money. I am quite satisfied not to make any profits, and do not complain when, as in the case of *Snobs*, I am just covering expenses. But I will not go any further."

M. Lassalle, it is thought, will return to the Paris Opéra next autumn, possibly as Berkmester in *Les Maîtres Chauterrs de Nuremberg*.

M. Pfeiffer's *Jacqueline*, which was to have been produced at the Paris Opéra Comique towards the end of June, will not be seen until the beginning of the autumn season.

Herr Sudermann has just completed a five-act play, *Johannes*, which will be produced at the Deutsches Theater, Berlin, in September.

Signor Leoncavello is making *Trilby* the groundwork of an opera.

Mr. Daniel Frohman is about to return from London to New York, taking with him *The Princess and The Butterfly*, in which Miss Julia Opp, loaned to him by Mr. George Alexander, will play the heroine. He says that *The Physician*, which Mr. Willard is to produce in America, is "a strong, well-arranged, and interesting play." Of *Secret Service* he writes : "It is an altogether unique and great success, and makes a fine opening in London for good American plays, of which I hope that our authors—who now have a great opportunity on all stages—may take advantage."

Miss Opp was formerly a journalist in America, but soon found the stage more to her taste. She made her *début*, under Mr. Alexander's management, at the St. James's.

Mark Twain, though still able to write well, is said to have fallen upon evil days, and the *New York Herald* proposes a subscription in his behalf. Yet, as Mr. Fiske remarks, he cannot, in the circumstances, be considered an object of charity. The debts that he incurred through the failure of Webster and Co., his publishing firm, are not pressing him now ; his bankruptcy relieved him from all legal liabilities ; but if a large fund were contributed, and he accepted it, he would at once hand it over to his business creditors in payment of these old firm debts. If the *Herald* subscription be continued with his sanction, his friends must insist that the money be settled upon his wife, who is, after all, the person most to be pitied. Mark Twain was once a dramatist ; a play of his was produced at the Fifth Avenue Theatre. Why not organise a theatrical benefit for him ?

Mr. J. E. Dodson, we regret to say, will not, owing to the continued run in New York of *Under the Red Robe*, be able to return to England this year, as he had wished. The piece will probably go all through the summer, thanks in a large measure to his fine impersonation of Richelieu.

American managers are a practical race. One of them lately wrote from a small Kansas town to New York for a prima donna to head a travelling company at the local Opera House. "What we want in particular," he said, "is a star. Have you got anything that would do for a leading lady ? Price no object if she suits our people. But you understand in advance : We don't want a has-been ; we don't want a going-to-be ; we want an *is*."

Mr. Mansfield has secured the rights of *'Chand d'Habits*.

Chicago is to have a *Dramatic Magazine*. "Such a magazine, to do for

the profession in this country what *The Theatre* does in England, is badly needed, and if it be properly conducted cannot fail to succeed." So says the New York *Spirit of the Times*.

An autobiography of Mrs. Malden (Clara Fisher), the oldest of American actresses, has been issued by the Dunlap Society. Her career began eighty years ago at Drury Lane Theatre. In 1827 she went to America, there to meet with marked success. For many years she has been living at Harlem, active, bright, and full of anecdote. "What an actor," she says, "Edmund Kean was! Earnest, impetuous, and full of fire! Macready was a great contrast to him, of a totally different school—classic and mechanical, a great artist and painstaking, as I have said, never losing a point. But Edmund Kean made you jump! He made me jump, and, in fact, all the artists who had a chance to see him; but Macready?—never! I have seen all the great actors, and played on the same evenings with many of them, including Kean and Macready, but I never saw anyone surpassing Kean. I remember Edmund Kean's Othello, Sir Giles, and Shylock. They were all great, and electrified the audiences. His Othello must have been the most effective ever played, and his voice in the farewell and in the last act I can hear even now, so beautiful and pathetic. His manner at rehearsal was very quiet. In Othello, Macready, like Forrest and others, gave particular directions to Iago where to stand, especially in the famous scene in the third act. At a theatre in the provinces the Iago earnestly asked Mr. Kean: 'Where shall I stand?' Edmund Kean slowly and quietly said: 'Wherever you like, sir; I shall find you.'"

According to the *Musical Age*, the economical habits ascribed to Signor Tamagno were shared by Mr. Chevalier and Mr. Van Biene in America. The latter, although he was making a handsome sum every week, used to declaim continually against the exorbitant prices of everything that he ordered or bought; while the former, during the earlier days of his vogue in New York at least, spent some time in moving from one hotel to the other in the effort to find suitable accommodation at a suitably low price. He finally selected an unpretentious boarding-house.

An interesting biography of Laura Keene, by Mr. John Cosham, has just been brought out in Philadelphia. It may be expected to find many readers, even on this side of the Atlantic. Born in London, she appeared with Mme. Vestris at the Olympic, presently migrated to the United States, and became a successful actress-manageress there. It was under her auspices that Sothern appeared as Lord Dundreary, at first a small part, but soon to be the chief feature of the piece. She was playing at Ford's Theatre, Washington, on the night of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, and was the only one present who could identify the assassin. Miss Keene died in 1873, at the age of forty-seven.

The title page and index for the latest volume of *The Theatre*, January to June, 1897, may now be had from the publishers, price 2d.

THE THEATRE.

SEPTEMBER, 1897.

Our Watch Tower.

A BOOM IN SHAKSPERE.

E are face to face once more with a boom in Shakspere. Certain periodical writers, of the extremely "modern" type, are never tired of telling us that the Bard of Avon is in every sense dead—except so far as he lives again in the dapper person of M. Maeterlinck. And yet the Bard has a singular habit of constantly cropping up—of continually asserting himself—of suddenly arising in his might and confounding all his enemies. Sooner or later, even the most "modern" of the managers have a knack of falling back upon him. Quite without warning there comes a "slump" in Pineros, Joneses, and Grundys; and then there is again a boom in Shakspere—the despised and rejected Shakspere of the *Saturday Review*.

What have we seen of late? We have seen Mr. Beerbohm Tree electing to close an interesting season with a revival (though only for two nights) of *Hamlet*. We have seen Mr. Forbes Robertson announcing a season at the Lyceum, at which a revival of the same "antiquated" "worn-out" tragedy is to be the *pièce de résistance*. And what have we heard, almost at the same moment? That Mr. Forbes Robertson hopes, before his sub-tenancy of the Lyceum ends, to re-produce *Othello*, in which he made so deep a mark at Manchester last year; that Mr. Forbes Robertson also hopes, at a still further date, and at some other theatre, to revive *The Tempest*, of which there has been no adequate representation in London for many decades past; that Mr. Tree, when he returns to town from his provincial tour, will present, along with *The Silver Key*, the *Katherine and Petruchio* which Garrick compiled from Shakspere's *Taming of the Shrew*;

that Mr. George Alexander, not unwisely giving *Much Ado About Nothing* the go-by for the present, is preparing to stage *Henry V.* at the St. James's; and, lastly, that Mr. Tree still has *Julius Cæsar* in his mind for production at Her Majesty's in 1898.

Now, this, for a "played-out" dramatist, is a tolerably good record. We do not wish to blow the trumpet for the Bard too loudly. No doubt there is an element of accident in the collocation of so many Shaksperean enterprises at this juncture. Nor do we say that it is invariably pure love of Shakspere that leads to his public exploitation. The young and ambitious player always sees in the Bard opportunities of *réclame*, if not of fame. A new Hamlet, a new Othello, a new Prospero, a new Henry V.—to say nothing of a new Ophelia, a new Desdemona, a new Miranda: what a fascination each of these has, not only for the player, but for the playgoer! There are those, probably, of the younger generation who have never seen *Henry V.* on the boards; there are those, probably, of the older generation who cannot remember a worthy presentation of *The Tempest*. *Julius Cæsar* has not been done in London since it was undertaken by the Saxe-Meiningen performers. There is apt, therefore, to be a double attraction about a Shakspere play—the attraction of curiosity about the piece, and the attraction of curiosity as to the manner in which it will be rendered—each of them sufficiently powerful, and the two together usually irresistible.

Certain it is that Shakspere, properly illustrated, no longer "spells ruin" to the manager. On the contrary, it generally spells fortune. A really efficient production of Shakspere is, nowadays, always a success. It was not ever thus. Neither Charles Kean nor Samuel Phelps put much money in his purse over the Bard. Neither appealed to a very large circle of *habitués;* they "did" the thing well, but they did not coin money in the doing. They spent freely, as far as their means allowed; but the outcome of it all was nothing to be compared to the Shakspere revivals of the last twenty years. The fact is that, laudable as were Kean and Phelps, both as actors and as producers, neither of them possessed a spark of the divine fire, and after they passed away the Shaksperean cult languished in this country. Charles Calvert did something for it in the provinces on its artistic side, and actors like Barry Sullivan did something for it on its popular side; but it was not until Henry Irving became lessee of the Lyceum in 1878 that Shakspere attained his apotheosis on the English stage. In 1874-5 Henry Irving had played Hamlet in London for two hundred consecutive nights without any aid from scenic or histrionic brilliancy. In 1878 he showed

not only how *Hamlet* should be played, but how it should be illustrated; and it is from that memorable year that we may date the full force of the Shaksperean revival, of which the approaching "boom" is the natural outcome.

Shakspere cannot now be produced in the west-end of London without considerable outlay in the way of cast, scenery, and appointments. For that Henry Irving is responsible, but we do not think the fact is to his discredit or his detriment. Rather the contrary. No doubt the result is that, comparatively speaking, west-end Londoners see but little of Shakspere, despite an occasional "boom," such as that of which we speak. But is it not better that we should see Shakspere interpreted rarely than that we should see him interpreted ill? For our part, though we cannot find it in our heart to condemn very violently well-meaning seasons of "cheap Shakspere," we confess that rather than have "cheap Shakspere" we would have no Shakspere at all. For what does "cheap Shakspere" mean? It means an inadequate cast and inadequate mounting. It must needs mean that. It may mean a very respectable and creditable production, but it cannot mean a satisfying interpretation. The scenery will be of the make-shift order; the acting will be of the sound (no doubt) but conventional sort. And it is not right, we hold, that Shakspere should be submitted to the younger generation in this fashion. It is the first impression made by a Shaksperean play that counts. We think fondly of our first Hamlet, our first Othello, our first Macbeth—our first Rosalind, our first Desdemona, our first Ophelia.

How desirable, then, it is that the modern representation of Shakspere shall be worthy of the Bard of all time! We want our children to have something to talk about in the days to come. And that, for the most part, is what they get nowadays. Mr. Forbes Robertson's *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Tempest* will, we may be sure, be worthy of his training at the Lyceum; and the best, likewise, may be looked for in the *Julius Cæsar* of Mr. Tree, and the *Henry V.* of Mr. Alexander. Mr. Alexander has already given us *As You Like It*; Mr. Tree, *Hamlet*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *Henry IV.*; and Mr. Forbes Robertson, *Romeo and Juliet*. To whatever extent these laid themselves open to adverse comment, this at least was clear—that the aforesaid actor-managers had done their level best to rise to the present high standard of the public taste. And that high standard, we repeat, was raised originally—gradually, but surely—by Henry Irving, with the aid of the cultivated classes, but mainly by force of his own genius, knowledge, enthusiasm, and perseverance.

Portraits.

MISS JULIE OPP; MR. HARRY NICHOLLS.

WE present this month the portrait of another of the actresses which America has lent to England. Miss Julie Opp began as a journalist, but soon elected to go on the stage. Engaged by Mr. George Alexander to understudy leading parts, she has had opportunities of appearing as Rosalind and in *The Princess and the Butterfly*, in both of which she displayed very remarkable promise. Many will remember the pretty unaffectedness with which she recited the rhymes of Hymen in the last act of *As You Like It*. Passing from one who seems destined to attain a place in high comedy, we speak now of an actor who has long held an almost unique position in the affections of the London playgoer. Hard figures tell us that Mr. Harry Nicholls is a few years more than forty, yet the fact seems difficult to believe when he is seen on the stage, in his home at Bedford-park, at his club, or at his Masonic lodge. Beginning as a mere boy, he remained five years in the provinces, and played all sorts of characters—even tragic characters. His first London appearance—that great event in an actor's life—was made in the early seventies at the Surrey Theatre, then under the management of William Holland. Thence he went to the Grecian, where Robson and so many others had graduated. Here he played with conspicuous success, notably in *Arrah-na-Pogue*. A fourteen years' stay at Drury Lane followed, and during this period he collaborated with Sir Augustus Harris in nearly all the pantomimes produced by the latter. Being connected by marriage with Mr. Henry Pettitt, he found an added pleasure in playing a variety of parts specially written for him by that ingenious dramatist. For the last three seasons he has been as great a favourite at the Adelphi as he was at what Sir Augustus Harris used lovingly to call the "National" Theatre. His range is very wide, including such diversified characters as the bluff old Southern general Randolph in the present Adelphi play *Secret Service*, Gnatbrain in *Black Ey'd Susan*, Private Jupp in *One of the Best*, the little cockney convict in *Youth*, and Captain Danby ("The Dandy") in *A Life of Pleasure*. He has also written many amusing songs, one of which is a skit on the old Junior Garrick Club. One may regard Mr. Nicholls as the legitimate successor of Mr. Toole as the exponent of that broad unctuous humour of which the older actor is a master, and which all of us hope to enjoy many times again.

Photographed by Alfred Ellis, 20, Upper Baker St., N.W. *Copyright.*

MISS JULIE OPP,

IN *THE PRINCESS AND THE BUTTERFLY.*

The Round Table.

PETER THE GREAT ON THE STAGE.

By Francis Ormathwaite.

NO little interest has been excited by Sir Henry Irving's announcement that he is about to produce a play from the pen of his second son, Mr. Laurence Irving, on an episode in the life of Peter the Great. Intent upon presenting a remarkable historical figure upon the stage, the author could hardly have made a better choice. Nurtured amidst scenes of family strife, Peter rose to supreme power in his teens, and in the course of a few years showed high capacity both as a warrior and as a statesman. He had a keen vision, an iron will, a due belief in himself, and a striking love of work, together with the imperious and ruthless spirit that was probably necessary in his time to the fulfilment of his policy. It is not too much to say that he did much to bring his vast dominions out of darkness into light. In spite of formidable opposition, he reformed the whole system of government, the army, and the manners of the people. He assiduously cultivated all the arts of peace, learnt modern languages, and sent many of his subjects abroad to study western civilisation at first-hand. What to some of us may appear the most curious part of his career has yet to be mentioned. The sight of a small vessel built by Dutchmen on the river at Moscow inspired him with a determination to have a navy, which Russia did not then possess. He came to England in 1698, and, after an exchange of courtesies with William III., entered himself as an ordinary workman at Deptford dockyard in order to acquire a knowledge of shipbuilding. If as dirty in his habits as a barbarian bred and born would be, this powerful autocrat, who was to annihilate the Swedish army, under the fiery Charles XII., at Pultowa, had a marked simplicity and kindness of manner. "The Tsar," writes Dangeau in 1717, chronicling the Russian visit to Paris, "went to the Invalides. He insisted on examining and seeing everything, even

to tasting their soup and drinking their healths, calling them 'comrades,' and tapping them on the shoulder in sign of friendship. He was much satisfied with the way in which the officers are fed and kept. He visited the church, which he thought superb; he was also delighted with the laundry, the surgery, and the infirmary. He felt the pulse of a soldier in his last agony, and declared that he would not die; as a matter of fact, he is not dead. The Maréchal de Vilcars," hero of Denain, "did the honours of the place." For the rest, the Tsar died at a comparatively early age, after receiving the titles of Peter the Great, Emperor of all the Russias, and Father of his Country.

Of course, so distinct and powerful a personality has received attention from time to time at the hands of the British playwright, though not always in such a spirit as an Ambassador from Russia to this country could have approved to a greater extent than our present Admiral Field approves of the production of *Nelson's Enchantress*. In one way or another, opera would seem to have marked this stern and inflexible Tsar for its own. In 1807, at Covent Garden, there was a musical three-act drama about him, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kemble playing the principal characters. Andrew Cherry, the actor, was the writer, and Jouve the composer. Peter here disguises himself as a common workman in one of his own dockyards, speedily falls in love with Catherine, and eventually, entering in his imperial robes, takes her to his heart. In spite of some merit, particularly in the score, the piece, which had *Wooden Walls* as a second title, was acted only five times. Passing to 1829, we find at Drury Lane a *Peter the Great, or the Battle of Pultowa*. Also in three acts, with plenty of illustrative music, it dealt, as may be inferred from its title, with a subject of a little deeper historical importance, since it introduced Charles XII. (Cooper) and Alexis (Vining). Charles Young played the Tsar, while subordinate parts were filled by Miss Ellen Tree, Liston, and William Farren. Like its predecessor, this production had a run of but a few nights. Unlike its predecessor, it did not appear in print, and its author took some pains to conceal his identity. The Tsar has also been seen in *The Star of the North*, Planché's *'Twould Puzzle a Conjurer*, and in an opera brought out at the Gaiety a quarter of a century ago under the title of *Peter the Shipwright*.

It is hardly surprising in one particular respect that Mr. Laurence Irving—the youngest, I think, of our actor-dramatists—should have selected this subject for treatment on the stage. His formal education completed, he entered the Diplomatic service at St. Petersburg and Moscow, where he acquired a strong

taste for Russian history and literature. Not until two or three years ago did he resolve to follow his father's profession. Is the new play to be based on hard fact or partly fabulous? Probably it relates to three important events in Peter's life—his divorce, his romantic marriage with the humble Catherine, and his condemnation of the heir to the throne, the rebellious Alexis, through the judges, the clergy, and the great officers of State. If that be so, we shall not see the Tsar's life on the riverside at Deptford, so well illustrated in the picture exhibited at the Royal Academy a few years ago. Mr. Laurence Irving, at all events, may be trusted to give us something to remember. He has already written three short plays, the last of which, *Godefroi and Yolande*, brought out in America during Sir Henry Irving's recent tour there, had so much power that, with the inestimable aid of Miss Ellen Terry as the leading character, a leper, he led his audiences to take keen interest in a somewhat gruesome story. Like his elder brother, Mr. H. B. Irving, the author of a clever article in the August issue of the *Nineteenth Century* on Eugene Aram, he appears to have inherited no small share of literary aptitude, especially as to directness and grace of style. It is an open secret that Sir Henry Irving has a profound belief in the new *Peter the Great*, and he will assuredly impersonate the hero with all the intense but self-possessed enthusiasm which he invariably brings to his work. Thanks to the resources of stage-art, never better exemplified than by himself, he cannot fail to present us with a striking contrast between the towering Tsar and the diminutive Napoleon. And here, as in the majority of his undertakings, he will have the support of Miss Terry, who may find in Catherine, or a sort of Catherine, one of the best of her characters outside Shakspere.

LETTERS TO SOME DRAMATIC CRITICS.

To Alfred Watson, Esq.

Sir,—It is reputed, and from internal evidence in your writing I can well believe the story, that you took extraordinary pains to fit yourself for the responsibilities involved in dramatic criticism before you commenced dramatic critic. I most heartily wish that all critics of every kind had a similar sense of responsibility, and took equal trouble to equip themselves properly for the duties which, in many cases, they assume with exceeding

rashness. The tale, which I conceive not altogether an idle one, runs that you were at the pains of accurately learning the inner working of the theatre before you ventured on delivering yourself of judgment upon playwrights' and actors' work from the outside. I do not by any means entirely endorse the complaint often made by actors and painters that a critic who has not himself been "through the mill" has no right to be a critic at all. Yet you have proved (and I could match your case with another taken from the world of painting) that the more technical knowledge a critic possesses the more qualified he is for his post, so long as he does not fling technicalities in the face of the public, or lose sight of the fact that there may be the makings of a really great artist in a person who is at first terribly hampered by want of technical skill. Now, to this you are most happily alive. You are perfectly right in finding no excuse for clumsiness or stupidity, or both, in one who has been "at it" for several years; and you are perfectly right also in not being too "down upon" a beginner whose gifts are for the time overweighted by an ignorance which only experience can cure. I should say that if you err it is rather in the direction of severity to old, than want of recognition for young, stagers. You have, you see, a natural turn for a somewhat sarcastic humour, and I think that on occasions it runs a little away with you. I do not mean that you are ever unjust, but I do think that, like most people who possess "le trait," you are sometimes impelled to a certain harshness of opinion. I can imagine that those who suffer in this way at your hands are but the more distressed by the exquisite neatness with which your opinion is expressed. If I am not much misinformed, you were accustomed to write over the signature "Rapier" (a pseudonym which you probably assumed in the common and mistaken belief that a rapier is a modern duelling-sword), and certainly your weapon as a critic is distinctly the small-sword, or rather the spadroon, for you use edge as well as point, and emphatically not the bludgeon, the use of which you would, I imagine, most completely disdain. I have no doubt that your technical knowledge adds greatly to the value of your work, but I do not for a moment believe that so fine a critic as you have constantly proved yourself to be can be merely made. The true critic, indeed, is as much born as is the true poet, and if ever there was a true critic you are he. I attach, as you may guess from these words, the very highest value to your opinion, both as to the broadest outlines, and as to the very finest details of the performances given to us both by playwrights and by actors; and in the case of my being unable

myself to see a play or a comedian, I should feel that in reading your criticism, allowing always for the inclination on which I have above remarked, I had got as close an idea as it was possible to get without having been one of the audience.

Your operatic criticism does not fall at all points within my province, but beginning with the statement that musicians assure me of its excellence from their point of view, I may congratulate you on your nice discernment of the difference between various schools of lyric acting. Assuredly you are not the man to pay heed to the vain tales of some actors that there is no such thing as operatic acting. On the contrary, I should uncommonly well like to hear the matter argued out between such an actor and yourself, who know very well that there is such a thing, and that some great singers—Ronconi, for instance—have owed at least half their reputation to their acting powers. And so, with that one recommendation to you to have less of Mercutio's and more of the ice-brook's temper,

I am, &c.,

L. Anon.

To Moy Thomas, Esq.

Sir,—You, with some other excellent "fellows whose beards are grey," and who, like yourself, ply the swift pen in various domains of journalism and literature, may be adduced as a striking instance against the Horatian *ætas parentum pejor avis.* I am, however, by no means prepared to take oath that the contrast between the fine and, alas! old-fashioned courtesy of your school, and, to parody Tennyson, "the harsh, half-Yankee, swaggering *air*" of some of the youngsters does not confirm the Venusian bard as to *nos nequiores.*

For my own poor part the suggestion of such a contrast irresistibly reminds me of the diverse methods of conferring an appellation on a spade, and I fail to see any kind of advantage in the adjectival variety. To use a more fitting simile, your style carries with it the notion of courtly bows, gracefully ordered flirtings of a listener's fan, the melody and panoply of a minuet, while that of the younger generation which has not so much knocked at the door as banged it open with "new-humorous" expletives, recalls Mr. Punch's pictures and poems of 'Arry, and the captivating strains and contortions of Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay. I believe, Sir, that you could not write vulgarly, were you to try never so hard, and it most certainly is not in your nature to make such an attempt. It would not be very unnatural if with your style, flavoured as it were with delightful reminiscences of

jars of *pot-pourri* in old country-houses where no young people bring up-to-date modernity, you were to show, alongside with your love for some of the old actors, a suspicion at least of intolerance for the newer and newest schools. Now this, as it has ever appeared to me, is an obvious danger which you have avoided with the skill that is born from the union of experience and talent. I do not affirm that a possibly exaggerated impatience may not at times be discerned with a magnifying glass, but I may say without fear of contradiction that it must not be called visible to the naked eye. I have compared your style to the fine conduct of a ball-room in days of old. We must remember that society in those days was not, beneath the surface, so very unlike society in these days. It would be impossible for you to descend to the vulgar tittle-tattle upon which some unnameable papers practically exist. Yet there is in your writing just a hint—a mere aroma, indeed—of the personal element which had its allurements then as now. There is never a spice of ill-nature in it, but the tendency—one should call it no more—seems occasionally to detract, be it ever so little, from the full dignity which otherwise characterises your critical productions.

In one matter you are distinguished by an accomplishment which belongs to no time in particular, although it is at no time too common amongst journalists—I mean your wide and accurate knowledge of what goes on in other countries. You remind me of the late Palgrave Simpson in the readiness with which your perception and memory enable you to find the true derivation of an unacknowledged piece of borrowing, and your intimate knowledge of the foreign theatre and all its ways gives zest to the keenness and happiness of your dramatic judgment, in which, moreover, the polished man of letters is always to be discerned.

I remain, &c.,

L. Anon.

"ALAS, POOR GHOST!"

By Alfred C. Calmour.

IT must have seemed to many, when witnessing representations of *Hamlet*, that the *ghostly* atmosphere which should environ the opening scenes of the play has been frequently absent. Whether it be that familiarity with the character has bred in the actors' minds a species of contempt for the ghost, or that they have not rightly appreciated its importance in the artistic scheme of the play, I am unable to determine, but the fact that the whole

of the first scenes of *Hamlet* go for little or nothing should be sufficient proof that there is something wrong in the interpretation.

I venture to think that the keynote of the supernatural should be sounded in the *first line* spoken by Bernardo, which ought surely to be given as a hushed exclamation of terror, and not as a loudly-spoken sentinel's challenge. When Bernardo comes on to the battlements to meet the "rivals" of his watch—Horatio and Marcellus—and there discuss the appearance of the ghost, his mind would be naturally filled with this moving subject, for had he not been "distill'd almost to jelly by the act of fear" at the first appearances of the ghostly visitant? And now, when he encounters Francisco emerging from some shadowy nook on the battlements, he might reasonably be supposed to start back at the sudden apparition and, in tones of fright and agitation, exclaim, "Who's there!"

Francisco's reply to this: "Nay, answer me: stand, and unfold yourself," is a confirmation that the remark is unusual, and Bernardo's query, "Have you had quiet guard?" shows the thought that dominates his mind—not to dwell upon his eagerness to welcome Horatio, who asks "What, has this thing appear'd again to-night?" And so if this view be admissible the whole of the subsequent scenes gain in dramatic intensity and completeness—especially if the actor chosen to play the ghost be properly endowed for the part.

"O, there be players, that I have seen play"—the ghost—"and heard others praise, and that highly—not to speak it profanely—that, neither having the accent of Christians, nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed, that I have thought some of nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably."

It has long been an enigma to me why the part of the ghost should always be given to an emaciated gentleman with a *basso profundo* voice, as if the character of the "royal Dane" were first cousin to the apothecary in *Romeo and Juliet*. I am more astonished at this proceeding when I remember what pains Shakspere has taken to point out that the dead king was, when compared with Claudius, as "Hyperion to a satyr."

The whole scheme of the play is made illogical when a lean, cadaverous apparition appears, suggesting that it had "lain you i' the earth" a score of months, and in "robustious" tones bellows forth that he is doomed "to fast in fires;" a statement which the representative of the character takes literally, and comes on like a moth-eaten shadow of the man whose "like," Hamlet tells us, he shall not look upon again.

L.

Surely it must occur to those who study the text that the ghost—although "pale" in countenance—should be a faithful presentment of the dead King—a fine, manly fellow (who "smote the sledded Polack on the ice"), with a flexible human voice—swayed by human emotions, and speaking so as to heighten and not destroy the illusion Shakspere has so cunningly created.

Bernardo, Horatio, and Marcellus, when watching from the battlements, saw the ghostly sovereign in the "habit as he lived." "I knew your father; these hands are not more like," exclaims Horatio, and yet when we see this "majestical" monarch and hear his voice, we are forced to conclude that Queen Gertrude was not so blamable when she turned from the contemplation of his "picture in little" to gaze upon the manly charms of the sensual Claudius, who is often presented as a much more attractive personality than his "wholesome brother." Perhaps in a future revival of *Hamlet* we shall see, in place of the rickety-kneed spectre, a ghost that shall at least suggest his living prototype had—

> "An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;
> A station like the herald Mercury,
> New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;
> A combination, and a form, indeed,
> Where every god did seem to set his seal,
> To give the world assurance of a man."

Or, if that be impossible, would it not be better to omit this and other descriptions of the—

> "fair and warlike form
> In which the majesty of buried Denmark
> Did sometimes march."

LOVE IN A MAZE: A RECOLLECTION.

By Edward J. Goodman.

I HAVE not a word to say against the excellent version of Alexandre Dumas' *Mariage sous Louis XV.* as adapted by Mr. Sydney Grundy under the title of *A Marriage of Convenience*, or the admirable performance of it by the Haymarket company. It has had a good run already, and on its revival this month I hope it will be carried through the autumn and winter seasons. Nevertheless, old associations give me an affectionate recollection of, if not a preference for, that other play, *Love in a Maze*, which Dion Boucicault founded on the same French original, and which had a successful career at the Princess's Theatre so long ago as the year 1851. It was produced on the 6th March, and was played continuously for about two months, and then at intervals, according to the custom of the times, now so different, alternately

with other pieces. One of these, that in fact which immediately followed *Love in a Maze*, was *The Duke's Wager*, founded on Dumas' *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle*, so that we have the curious coincidence that two Dumas plays, produced successively by Charles Kean forty-six years ago, have been revived in new versions, within the same season, at two theatres in the Haymarket. The Princess's was then under the joint management of Charles Kean and Robert Keeley, a happy combination which ought to have lasted longer than it did, for the two actors and their wives were consummate artists, and each couple, when both acted together, afforded the other all that artistic contrast which is so much needed for a perfect ensemble. The Keans and the Keeleys were alike fitted to give effect to high comedy, although their "lines" were cast in other places. With them were associated that finished comedian, Alfred Wigan, and the exquisitely droll John Pritt Harley, neither of whom has an exact counterpart in these days. The cast of *Love in a Maze* was a splendid one, and I give it below in full :—

Lord Minever	Mr. Alfred Wigan
Sir Abel Buckethorne ...	Mr. Addison
Tony Nettletop	Mr. Keeley
Col. Buckethorne	Mr. C. Kean
Mopus	Mr. Harley
Joe Harrup	Mr. Meadows
Lady Aurora Fullalove ...	Mrs. Winstanley
Mrs. Buckethorne	Mrs. C. Kean
Faith	Mrs. Keeley

The above list of characters suggests at once that there must have been a wide departure from the play of Dumas on which Boucicault founded his comedy. If Sir Abel Buckethorne is to be identified with the General, and Lord Minever with the Chevalier de Valclos, and Colonel and Mrs. Buckethorne with the Comte and Comtesse de Candale, Mopus and Faith are but little like Jasmin and Marton, while Tony Nettletop and Lady Aurora Fullalove are entirely new characters. In fact, there is nothing in common between the two pieces except the main idea. A young lady and gentleman enter upon a marriage arranged by their relatives—in this case by the father of the husband—and, having at first shown an aversion to one another, come at last to a good understanding and are united. The lady has a dandy admirer whom she throws over, but her husband has no Marquise as in the original. In other respects, too, Boucicault parts company with Dumas and goes his own way. The capital scene in which the husband interrupts the interview between his wife and her adorer and tells them a supposititious

story and leaves them to their sense of honour—Kean was very fine in this scene—is retained, but not much else. The characters so far are much the same as those of Dumas, but the old man is a typical British country squire, and the others are distinctly English of the late seventeenth century. But it is in the interpolated parts that Boucicault breaks away most boldly from his French author. Tony Nettletop is a woman-hater, rendered such by the fickleness of Lady Aurora, who jilted him in their youth, and now as a widow does her best to regain him, and, of course, succeeds. Mopus is his valet, and follows his master's example in both ways, ending by securing the lively lady's-maid, Faith. All these personages play a very active part in the drama, and help to complicate the main plot and give it bold relief. They were all capital parts, suited exactly to the peculiar style of those cast for them. In fact, the scenes in which they figured were quite the most amusing in the performance. I rather wonder that Mr. Grundy did not take the valuable hint they supply.

But he has chosen to adhere with tolerable fidelity to Dumas' play, while Boucicault, on the other hand, made it thoroughly English, and as such it is a most admirable imitation of the seventeenth century comedy in dialogue and general tone. It is extremely well written throughout—I do not think that justice has ever been done by criticism to Boucicault's literary power—and here and there is delightfully witty. Thus in Act I. the gloomy Mopus says: "I am dying by inches; paying the debt of nature by instalments." "Oh! and which part of you first gave up the ghost?" asks the squire. Mopus: "The heart, Sir Abel, the heart." Sir Abel: "And ever since you have worn that hatchment of a face." Again, Col. Buckethorne says: "My Lord, I never tell a lie." "No," observes Lord Minever, "one keeps a valet who would never allow a gentleman to put on a foul conscience under his clean linen." There are some particularly smart passages in the third act, the following, for instance:—

Lord Minever: Does your ladyship believe in the transmigration of souls?

Lady Aurora: Heaven forbid!

Lord A.: I do, and I think a defunct hyæna established its propensities in the corpus of that very objectionable little person.

Lady A.: Mr. Nettletop! Your lordship slanders the kindest, noblest heart——

Lord M.: Possibly. I did not refer to the creature's intestines.

But Tony Nettletop has his revenge later on.

Lady A.: We cannot every day entertain a peer of the realm—a pillar of the state.

Tony: Say rather a pilaster, which, possessing all the pretence of a pillar, affords none of its support.

But perhaps the literary gem of the piece is a set of quaint verses which Tony Nettletop reads in the fourth act. I do not know whether Boucicault could claim originality for them—there is a suspicious suggestion of a foreign source about them—but whether they are his own or not they are decidedly clever. Tony is caught by Lady Aurora gazing at a medallion, which contains her own portrait, but, unwilling to admit what it really is, he pretends that it is an antique with an inscription which he had been endeavouring to decipher. And this is what he reads:—

It was the seventh eventide,
Man had been just created.
Nature, with joy elated,
The news was spreading far and wide;
And the fresh-made form in sleep lay lock'd.
The Evil One was passing by,
When the form on a bank he chanc'd to spy,
And he grew pea-green with jealousy.
Then examin'd he
The anatomy,
With care to see
If there might not be
Some vacancy
By an oversight left there.'
And he tried each limb, each bone he knock'd,
Till he came to the left breast, where
The Evil Spirit found it gave a hollow sound.
Aha! quoth he—here's room for me!
And he gave his tail a swish of joy,
And he laughed aloud and capered high,
As an image fair he buried there;
Then hied away, all free from doubt,
Secure of room for sin—
For who can keep the devil out,
Where——

Your ladyship came in—just then.

Lady Aurora: Oh, sir! I can supply the line—"Where woman can come in."

There is a duel in the play, but it is a sham one, fought by Tony Nettletop and Lord Minever, Tony having provided unloaded pistols, merely to give the dandy lord a lesson under certain circumstances. The duel takes place in the centre of a maze—a capitally contrived scene—which gives the title to the piece, and which might happily be introduced into some modern play. The entrances and exits are made through its windings, and there is a fine old oak tree, the hollow of which forms a summerhouse with double doors that alternately conceal and reveal two sets of lovers in succession with good effect.

The performance seemed to me—I confess I was a very young critic at the time—absolutely perfect. The Keans, though accustomed to more serious work, did ample justice to the comedy and light sentiment of this seventeenth century play; but the acting honours, I think, rested chiefly with Alfred Wigan. I can imagine nothing more finished of its kind than his beau of the period. Wigan was one of the finest stage gentlemen ever seen, with a handsome presence, clear-cut features, and one of the most musical and sympathetic of voices. He gave point to every speech in his quiet but incisive way, and the manner in which his pretty oaths, "strike me dainty," "strike me modest," "sunburn me," and "if ever I come into the country again, may I be freckled," slipped off his smooth tongue was delightful. If he was a fop and a trifler, there was always a certain dignity in his bearing, and even a touch of pathos in the words he uttered when, undeceived by Mrs. Buckethorne as to her feelings towards him, he said, "This is too cruel—diminish me! Submit my love to any torture but that of ridicule; vilify me rather. A man may make himself a villain, but fools, like poets, are born so. Consider my peerage, its claims to hereditary wisdom, and assail not my mother's honour by proving my father's son a fool. Madame (bows): I have the regret"—(Exit.)

The Keeleys, too, were quite at their best. The still living Mrs. Keeley was an unequalled pert waiting-maid, while her husband, as Tony, rose far above his usual level as a farce-actor. Harley, too, with his dry but unctuous humour, was an admirable Mopus. Addison was always good as a hearty country gentleman, and Mrs. Winstanley, as the fair-full-and-forty widow, was all that such a character should be; while the very small part of Joe Harrup, an old huntsman, played by Meadows, was a delightful study. We have acting quite as good as that nowadays. There is nothing I deprecate more than the habit of unjustly extolling the past at the expense of the present. But there is always a peculiar charm about our first loves, and such taste in theatrical matters as I may happen to have was born of such performances as that of *Love in a Maze*.

SHOULD THE TOURING SYSTEM BE ABOLISHED?

By Leopold Wagner.

THE reasons why it should are sufficiently potential. Let us briefly consider them. Under the existing state of things young actors have very little opportunity of learning their business. They play the same part night after night round the

country for a number of years. There are no rehearsals, no demands for fresh "study," and the easy life they lead induces laziness, a love of pleasure, and an addiction to betting. They live up to the last shilling of their salaries; the thought of saving never arises in their minds. As long as the commercial stability of the manager is to be relied upon, they make not the slightest attempt to improve their position. They are content to play their one part for an indefinite period without striving after an engagement in a better company producing a superior class of play. The talents of many good actors are often wasted upon productions that are beneath criticism. Such originality as they may possess is suffered to lie latent; their ambition is quenched; they make no effort to mount the ladder of Fame. If the company is sent out by a London manager, they are expected to imitate the original exponent of the part they have been engaged for in every particular. Engagements are not nearly so difficult to procure by novices as they were in the old days. The present overcrowded state of the profession is largely, if not wholly, due to the facilities afforded by the touring companies to well-dressed amateurs with money to enter the ranks by virtue of the premiums they pay. Any raw recruit can be drilled into an unimportant part by a painstaking stage-manager. Young people take to the stage nowadays from the idea that it is "a jolly life." And they are not mistaken. Provided "the ghost walks" with undeviating regularity, their existence is one unbroken round of pleasure. They see fresh sights every week, or, at most, every fortnight; their "professional apartments" are secured for them by the agent-in-advance, and they go to their "business" in the evening as light-hearted as the lady of fashion who presides at her allotted stall at a charity bazaar. A performance that has grown mechanical from nightly repetition for months is play, not work. The excitements of the night come as a welcome change after the leisure of the long day.

Under these conditions the active pursuit of the actor's profession is very different from what it was in the old "stock company" days. Then a young actor had to make his way on the boards by sheer hard work and ability. His first engagement was always very difficult to command. He commenced as a "general utility," playing any part the stage-manager chose to cast him for—often two or three parts in one evening. The plays were constantly changed. Only an Easter or Whitsuntide production was calculated to hold the boards for more than a single week. Rehearsals by day, a heavy performance at night, and "study" until the small hours constituted the provincial

actor's daily programme. He became so well versed in the "legitimate" that after a year or two he could play a whole round of characters at a moment's notice. By serving an apprenticeship to "general utility," each new actor discovered the particular "line of business" he was best suited for. It was his ambition to get out of "responsibles" as soon as he possibly could. On the score of leading an easy life the new *régime* is a decided improvement on the old order, but in the interests of Art it leaves very much to be desired. All our great actors owe their present positions to their rough training in the provinces. The actors of our day have not the opportunities of professional advancement that fell to the lot of those of the old school. They are better paid, and they fare worse.

It is urged that the touring system has vastly improved the social status of the actor. This is true for reasons not far to seek. The stage is chiefly recruited from the wealthy class. Acting has become fashionable. Society actors and actresses who would have disdained to work their way up from the bottom rung of the ladder now purchase the country rights of a London success, and set up in management on their own account, supported by a "specially selected London company." There are few travelling companies that do not contain several novices and amateurs with no natural aptitude for the stage whatever. The minor characters are nearly in all cases sustained by stage-struck heroes and heroines who have paid a premium for their coveted position. The "baggage-man" is generally pressed into service to play a small part, and the acting manager, whose business duties are simple, often "struts and frets his brief hour upon the stage" after most of the audience have taken their seats.

The touring system is the one thing which has made the suburban theatre a paying possibility. The weekly visits of the touring companies relieve the suburban manager of all risk, inasmuch as his patrons are enabled to witness a west-end success almost at their own doors at popular prices. And it is just the same in the provinces. Any local tradesman can now run a theatre at a profit without the least theatrical experience. People go to the theatre one week and do not like the play; they console themselves with the reflection that next week something better will be set before them. New productions are never heard of, *unless* the author of the play about to be exploited, or the speculative stranger, takes all the risks on his own shoulders. After all, the London successes constantly "on the road" are not so numerous as provincial audiences fondly imagine. Plays

which have failed in London are boomed in the country on the strength of a six nights' run at this or that west-end theatre. Occasionally, too, a vacant week has to be filled in by a play of which the local manager knows nothing. He can only rely upon a good show of posters. Then, again, when a town contains two or three theatres, a company often makes a return visit after a few weeks to a house situated but a stone's throw from the scene of its former visit. In this way country audiences have few novelties placed before them. They are invited to see the same play performed by the same company two or three times a year.

Much might be said on the relative positions of the so-called first-class and minor theatres of a former day, but want of space forbids. The Britannia Theatre has latterly recognised the necessity of mounting plays of which its patrons have heard good accounts as west-end productions. Now there is no distinction of theatres in a country town; they are all placed on the same footing—thanks to the touring system.

The touring system is also responsible for many society scandals and divorce proceedings which have come to light in these modern days. Actors and actresses can form *liaisons* on tour which would have caused them to be loathed by the good folk of a town, who could not fail to hear of their relations during the period of a "dramatic season" lasting several months. Nor must we lose sight of the fact that, whereas the "one-part actors" are now so numerous, the "stars" of a bygone day made a circuit of the provinces with an extensive *répertoire*. For this reason, it for no other, the present touring system must be discounted as an artistic development. The leading lights of the dramatic profession have degenerated into parrot actors, while their supporters lack the experience which can only come from the study of many parts. Our modern histrions compare most unfavourably with the actors and actresses of the old school. Socially superior they may be and better paid they are; but they can never boast of that practical training which was to be acquired under the old *régime*.

THE RIGHT OF CRITICAL EXPRESSION.

By Malcolm Watson.

THE case of Cooney *v.* Edeveain—in other words, the action brought by Miss Lottie Collins against the proprietor of *Society*—has not unnaturally aroused a good deal of attention in journalistic circles. In certain quarters, moreover, the verdict, given in favour of the plaintiff, appears to have been regarded as a distinct blow at the freedom of critical expression. A careful

examination of the facts tends to show, however, that this is not the case; that, indeed, so far as public criticism is concerned, matters stand practically where they were. At first glance the fact that a writer had been mulcted in damages on the simple grounds of having accused an artist of introducing a "touch of vulgarity" into a performance would seem to point in a different direction; and did this statement exhaust the entire question it is obvious that critics would in the future have to observe a degree of caution in their pronouncements altogether fatal to the expression of honest opinion. But, as Mr. Justice Hawkins very clearly put it in his summing up, "there is one thing which has been in my mind throughout, and that is, that we have not seen the person who wrote this article for the purpose of ascertaining from him what it was that made him write the article, and attribute the vulgarity which is mentioned in it to the young lady who has brought this action. If he had come forward, and if there had been any evidence given before you that in the course of the performance there was something which was tinged with vulgarity, which tended to shock decent people, we should then have known exactly what he was criticising, and what the performance was in respect of which his criticism was made; but we have heard nothing of the sort." Or, again, "that is the way her counsel (Mr. Henry Kisch) puts it, that it is not fair criticism upon anything the plaintiff has done, or upon anything that anybody else has ever observed in the course of her performances; and the critic himself does not come forward to point out what it is that gives him cause for his criticism." In other words, as the defendant, for reasons best known to himself, declined to offer any proof in substantiation of the charge made against Miss Lottie Collins in his paper, the verdict naturally was given in her favour.

Now, this is not only good law, but sound common sense. The only defence raised in the case was that "the words in their natural and ordinary meaning were fair comment upon a public performance," that is to say, that they came under the heading of fair criticism. This at once provokes the inquiry, what is "fair criticism?" Thirty years ago, in the well-known case of Wason *v.* Walter, Chief Justice Cockburn answered the question in the following manner. "A jury must be satisfied that the article was an honest and fair comment on the facts—in other words, they must be satisfied in the first place that the comments had been made with an honest belief in their justice; but that this was not enough, inasmuch as such belief might originate in the blindness of party zeal or in personal

or political aversion; that a person taking upon himself publicly to criticise and to condemn the conduct of another must bring to the task, not only an honest sense of justice, but also a reasonable degree of judgment and moderation." Twenty years later, Lord Esher, in the action brought by Mr. Herman Merivale against Mr. C. L. Carson, of the *Stage*, gave expression to an opinion much wider in its application and altogether more favourable towards Messieurs the Critics. "If," he said to the jury, "it is no more than fair, honest, independent, bold, even exaggerated criticism, then your verdict will be for the defendants." He went, however, still further by declaring that "mere exaggeration, or even gross exaggeration, would not make the comment unfair. However wrong the opinion expressed may be in point of truth, or however prejudiced the writer, it may still lie within the prescribed limit."

It is to be observed that in the Lottie Collins case the defendant carefully forbore from advancing the plea or offering evidence to the effect that his statements were true in fact. In touching upon this point, Mr. Justice Hawkins remarked: "Miss Lottie Collins says, with the greatest frankness in the world, ... 'If I have been vulgar or guilty of introducing monstrosities, charge me with it; and if you can prove it, do so; but do not insinuate against me these things unless I have done something which makes your comment upon me fair criticism upon my performance.' That," continued Sir Henry Hawkins, addressing the jury, "is a question, gentlemen, entirely for you." Was it to be expected, in view of all the circumstances stated, that the jury would return a verdict other than that which, in point of fact, it took them only a few minutes' consideration to arrive at? Suppose, for a moment, that I were publicly to denounce a man as a thief and a liar, and subsequently refuse to offer any proof of my assertions, how many people, I wonder, would be prepared to excuse my action on the plea that the expression of my unsupported opinion regarding another's conduct was perfectly justifiable on the ground of "fair criticism?"

There need consequently be very little apprehension among those whose duty it is to wield the critical pen that because Miss Lottie Collins has been awarded £25 in her suit against the proprietor of *Society* there is to be an end of all outspoken criticism, always provided that the critic can and will show that his remarks were the outcome of personal observation, and the honest belief springing from such observation. On the other hand, it has to be remembered that criticism of actors and actresses, however necessary it may be, involves,

as a rule, greater risks than those incurred in the case of other professions, such as the literary or the pictorial. For, in the one instance, the critic is dealing with the work of the artist, while in the other it is the personality of the individual himself with which he is concerned. A painter in this way may take no offence if you quarrel with his technique, although an actor will be up in arms at once should you object that his voice is harsh or his appearance disagreeable. So keenly alive to this fact are the dramatic critics that not infrequently they prefer entirely to ignore a bad performance rather than to qualify it in the terms it deserves. And just as it is so much easier *not* to write a play or a novel, so is it infinitely more simple to leave unsaid the things that might hurt or offend, even although their suppression should constitute a derogation from the critic's obvious duty. After all, silence in certain cases is the most eloquent form of condemnation.

"TOM FOOL'S" LEGAL STATUS.

By John Hollingshead.

CONSIDERING the numbers and importance of the dramatic, musical, and variety professions—the capital invested in their theatres, "palaces," and workshops—and, above all, the annual amount which a blood-sucking Government draws from them in the shape of Imperial and local taxes, it is high time that they had at least one Act of Parliament for their comfort and guidance, drawn clearly enough to be read by a Board School pupil studying as a servant-of-all-work, and interpreted clearly enough to avoid appeal and extra costs by the densest judge ever known to us. It was bad enough when "the profession" was regarded by some as a fortuitous concourse of "rogues and vagabonds"—mumming outcasts, "tom fools," gipsies, chicken-stealers, and tramps, almost outside the pale of the law; but it is worse now, in the days when they have a status, when they are the pets of society, and on the road to swell the ranks of the peerage, to see them treated like fools and children, tossed about in an everyday lawsuit at the mercy of "custom" as interpreted by old playgoers, managers, and "experts."

The session just concluded before the blessed calm of the Long Vacation has witnessed more curious trials and sentimental utterances—they can hardly be called "decisions"—than any previous session. Mr. Justice Hawkins, who, by the way, was married to a distinguished actress, has been twice engaged in

theatrical cases, and Mr. Justice Collins once. Mr. Justice Hawkins is what the Americans call a "level-headed" judge, and a great lawyer; but he, like all the Bench, would be far better replaced by a professional arbitrator when the scent of the footlights—escaped gas and stale orange-peel—comes across the Law Courts. There is the case of Miss Lottie Collins, who sued a "society" journal for libel, because its dramatic critic, or variety reporter, accused her of vulgarity, and got damages and costs from a sympathetic jury backed up by a more sympathetic judge. What next—and next? Why is Mr. Bernard Shaw ever allowed to live anywhere except in a stuffy law-court, defending eternal actions for libel? Is the man who, to the authority of his father, called Macready not an actor but a mad bull, to walk about unchallenged, while an anonymous writer thinks that a song like "The Widow," and the way in which it is rendered, is open to the charge of vulgarity? Probably vulgarity is not the proper word; but that is not the question. Any singer or actor who comes before the footlights must bear remarks that are not printed with regard to private individuals, though they are constantly uttered. A member of Parliament might as well fight against "privileged utterances," when those utterances are not pleasant, as a singer or an actor object to an assertion which may or may not be criticism. When Daniel O'Connell called Disraeli a descendant of the impenitent thief who died upon the Cross, he was not served with a writ for libel. He was sheltered, of course, by the House of Commons, but more by the liberty of debate. Miss Collins appealed to a jury, and an attractive woman always has an advantage over the ink-stained penny-a-liner. She got her verdict.

Mr. Justice Collins had before him a prosecution for giving Sunday concerts. He probably has no sympathy with the stagnant Sabbath—that eminently home-brewed production, which, like the half-past twelve o'clock Rule Britannia Act, is certainly not made in Germany, or in any civilised country on the face of the globe. It is a Sabbath openly and avowedly created in the great parliamentary interest of gin and beer, and is supported by the Society for the Propagation of Swinish Drinking. It is a shining creation of the great Lush-Trough Party. The Temperance people (poor fools!) have had a hand in bringing it into the supposed land of Freedom, under the impression that they are fighting the Continental Sunday bogey. Do they know what a Continental Sunday is? It is not a day in which the population wait to crowd into hot "boozing-kens," and a familiar sight is men and women vomiting at street corners. Mr. Justice

Collins protected the Queen's Hall, and consequently other similar concert-halls opened for Sunday music; but he might have protected them with better law and arguments. Because the entrance is nominally "free," and the only charge made is for seats, this hardly makes the concert legal. As a matter of fact, the free entrance only leads to a very small corner of the building, and nineteen-twentieths of the space is devoted to reserved seats, stalls, and balconies. Mr. Justice Collins knows that taking money, directly or indirectly, even by the sale of programmes out of doors at a distance from the concert, makes the entertainment one produced for gain. He wished to shield the defendants, and he did so, if only for a time. He gave a sentimental opinion, not a decision.

The case of Miss Sybil Arundale (which will doubtless go to Appeal, and "get there") was an action for wrongful dismissal. It touched upon the law of contracts—a very sacred law in the eyes of the judges, as it is the foundation and protection of trade—but not a thing to be seriously looked at in connection with theatres and music-halls. Miss Arundale sang on Sunday at a certain club where a regular theatre and concert-hall form part of the building, and Sabbath entertainments are things of weekly occurrence during the "season." Miss Arundale had not asked the permission of her employers—a powerful syndicate—and they considered that she had broken her contract. The judge, however (to whom the matter was left by the jury), found a door of escape. He ruled that Sunday was a *dies non*. He might have ruled, and practically did rule, that as it was a day in which no thoroughly legal performance could be given, a professional singer, or dancer, or actor, or actress, could do anything without breaking any contract. What about the injury to her employers? I will state a case. I engage Mme. Adelina Patti. I pay her £1000 to sing on Saturday, and another £1000 to sing on Monday. On the Sunday, the day in between, she goes to Mr. Alfred Rothschild's, and sings before a very large and distinguished party, including royalty. I engage Mme. Bernhardt, and pay her £80 a performance. I have often done so. She gives two performances of heavy plays in hot weather on the Saturday, and receives (as she often has done) £160. On the Sunday, when she ought to be resting and preparing for another arduous performance on Monday, she is at Lady Jeune's or Baroness Hirsch's, working like a "nigger." This is surely, in spirit, a breach of contract, in spite of phrases like *dies non*, or any other court-house Mumbo-Jumbo.

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MR. HARRY NICHOLLS.

Our laws affecting the dramatic profession, especially the licensing laws, are a disgrace to civilisation. The "sketch," which forms the chief *pabulum* of nearly all the music-halls, is utterly and hopelessly illegal. The balls, promenade concerts, circuses, &c., which find a place, from time to time, at Covent Garden Theatre, are no more covered by the mysterious and much-abused *patent* of Charles II., given to his "pals," Thomas Killigrew and Sir William Davenant, than a prize-fight, a bull-fight, or a public execution would be covered. The theatre, for the time being, becomes a "disorderly house." Everybody knows it. The Lord Chamberlain retires behind a royal screen, and the police authorities "wink the other eye." Our licensing laws are only fit to govern the entertainments (cannibal or otherwise) of African savages.

At the Play.

IN LONDON.

DURING the past month affairs theatrical have reached the point of absolute stagnation. One production alone possessing the slightest claim to importance has to be noticed. Day by day the west-end houses, succumbing to the double influence of an exceptionally hot summer and a moribund season, have closed their doors. Nor are there any very hopeful signs of an early resumption of activity. September, nevertheless, unless something totally unexpected should happen, is destined to show us a new Hamlet in the person of Mr. Forbes-Robertson, who is to occupy the Lyceum during Sir Henry Irving's absence in the provinces, and an untried Ophelia in Mrs. Patrick Campbell. Dramas by Mr. Haddon Chambers and Mr. Comyns Carr, and Mr. Cecil Raleigh and Mr. Henry Hamilton are also promised at respectively the Adelphi and Drury Lane. Meanwhile, it may be noted that amid the general lack of animation Mr. Beerbohm Tree has shown exceptional energy at Her Majesty's, where, on the evening of the 13th ult., he brought his season to a close with a revival of *Hamlet*. Since it was originally seen, Mr. Tree's conception of the part of the moody Dane appears to have suffered no material change. His reading of the part remains what it always was—scholarly, picturesque, and touched with a fine sense of the pathos inherent in the character. The rendering possesses little of the virility, the force, or, we may add, the intellectuality with which others have endowed it, but, on the other hand, it brings into distinct prominence the emotional aspect of the part. From the purely histrionic point of view it seems a pity that Mr. Tree still clings to his predilection for lengthy pauses and uselessly elaborate business. Another interesting feature of the month was the assumption by the regular members of the Adelphi company of the various parts in *Secret Service*, the step being rendered necessary by the return of Mr. William Gillette and his companions to New York. Unhappily the experiment proved far from successful. Clever

artists as they are in their own particular line of business, Mr. William Terriss, Mr. Harry Nicholls, and Miss Jessie Millward, showed unmistakably how ill-suited they are to work in a medium wholly foreign to their methods and their training.

The Sleeping Partner.

An English version of Miss Martha Morton's celebrated Comedy "His Wife's Father," founded on a German Play by L'Arronge. Produced at the Criterion Theatre, August 17.

Henry Bassett	Mr. James Welch	Mrs. Torrington ..	Miss Ffolliott Paget
John Temple	Mr. Fred Terry	Kitty Torrington ..	.. Miss Audrey Ford
Montague Brabazon	Mr. Lawrance D'Orsay	Aunt Janet	.. Mrs. E. H. Brooke
Byron Brabazon ..	Mr. Richard Lambart	Maid	.. Miss Dora Barton
Mason	Mr. F. H. Tyler	Nellie Bassett ..	.. Miss Lena Ashwell

Farce, comedy, tragedy, buffoonery—such are the conflicting elements of which *The Sleeping Partner* is composed. The result is, as might be expected, satisfactory in no sense; throughout the entire performance the confused listener vainly strives to get into accord with the authoress's intention. But grave as this defect undoubtedly is, it is not the only important one from which Miss Martha Morton's piece suffers. In the first place she has elected to present a group of characters who one and all act in the most foolish and exasperating fashion, while in the second their doings are set forth in feeble dialogue, and at outrageous length. The theme she handles is in truth so slight that in order to eke out the four acts of her play Miss Morton has been compelled to reintroduce again and again incidents that at an earlier stage have already done service. By this process of repetition she ends at length by exhausting the patience of her listeners, and provoking an invincible feeling of tedium. The complete absence of anything like common sense in the behaviour of her characters is also a fault for which there can be no excuse, and which serves to alienate all sympathy from them in their many tribulations. Yet it is easy to see how in more capable hands something interesting and acceptable might have been made of a subject which, although far from new, is full of possibilities. More than thirty years ago it yielded a rich harvest in *Hen and Chickens*, a comedy produced at the Adelphi, wherein Mrs. Stirling achieved an emphatic success, and since then the theme has frequently been handled to distinct advantage.

Miss Morton, however, has failed, as so many inexperienced playwrights fail, by adopting a policy of indecision. In place of making up her mind definitely as to the best course to be pursued she has apparently allowed herself to be drawn into devious and tortuous paths by the exigencies of the moment. Even her

principal character, Henry Bassett, is a mass of inconsistencies. Uniformly described as a shrewd and clever man, he constantly contrives to do the most foolish and idiotic things. So with the remainder of the characters in this most perplexing and irritating play. In point of variability Bassett's daughter Nell—the heroine of the piece—is a perfect weather-cock, prepared to turn in any direction with every change of wind, while the hero, John Temple, her husband, is, if anything, even more objectionably unstable. It is with the marriage of these two that the comedy opens. Bassett himself, having made a large fortune in the City, has determined to give up business altogether in favour of his son-in-law, and having now plenty of leisure on his hands he proceeds by his continual interference, and his desire to direct everything and everybody, to render himself obnoxious to the young couple. That an astute man such as Bassett is represented to be should act in so eminently foolish a fashion is in truth incredible. At first Nellie sides with her father, and an estrangement between husband and wife is in consequence brought about. Then, finding that she has driven her husband away from her, she rounds upon her father, and abuses him with commendable vigour. Meanwhile, Temple has shown that he, too, possesses powers of vituperation of no mean order; while Bassett alternates between lapses into maudlin sentiment and frenzied outbursts of rage. By the intervention of the only sensible person in the piece, admirably represented by Miss Ffolliott Paget, matters are at last set straight and peace restored. The minor characters are of the most conventional type, and wholly uninteresting. Nor is there much to be said for the performance, the stage-management of which left a great deal to be desired. Surely it is unnecessary at this time of the day to emphasize the fact that actors and actresses who know anything of their business are not wont to address every speech to, and constantly face, the audience across the footlights. Yet this is what was done in almost every instance at the first representation of *The Sleeping Partner*. Excellent actor as Mr. James Welch is, he has not, moreover, either the physical strength or the emotional power to do justice to the part of Henry Bassett. Mr. Fred Terry, in that of John Temple, seemed completely out of his element, and certainly did nothing to reconcile the audience to a character so thoroughly priggish and offensive. As Nellie Bassett, Miss Lena Ashwell revealed a pretty sense of comedy, and a decided turn for pathos. So admirable was she, it seems a pity she cannot succeed in gaining complete mastery over a voice that is apt at times to play her

false. Of the remaining characters it is only needful to mention that played by Miss Dora Barton, a young actress of marked promise.

A Labour of Love.

A Play in One Act, by Horace W. C. Newte. Produced at the Comedy Theatre, July 26.

Captain Lord Gayne .. Mr. Wilford Draycott	Private Hinks .. .. .. Mr. Harry Ford
Captain Gerald Laird Mr. Cosmo Stuart	Pearson .. .. Mr. Fred Thorne
Sergeant Phipps .. .. Mr. H. Deane	Violet Trent .. .. .. Miss Maud Abbott

The author of *A Labour of Love* is more to be congratulated on ambitious endeavour than successful execution. His little piece is rather a hotch-potch of diverse ingredients than a well harmonized play. As things go, however, it may be allowed to pass as a fairly satisfactory introduction to the more important part of the evening's entertainment at the Comedy during the off season. Although Mr. Newte's story cannot be described as absolutely novel it has its effective moments. The action of the piece takes place during the Indian Mutiny. The English garrison is besieged, and Captain Laird, alone with Violet Trent, who is engaged to his dearest friend, Captain Lord Gayne, believing that nothing can save them from death, confesses his love to Violet. A moment later the sound of cheering makes it evident that a rescue party is at hand, and shortly afterwards Gayne rushes in announcing the safety of the garrison. The constrained attitude of the lovers opens his eyes to the truth, and with the usual magnanimity of the stage hero he renounces all claim to the lady's hand. The comedy element of the piece is supplied, or rather lugged in apropos of nothing, by Pearson, the son of a patent pill maker, and altogether unrelated to the main issue of the plot. In this part Mr. Fred Thorne made the acting success of the evening, the others hardly rising above the level of mediocrity.

IN PARIS.

L'Enfant Malade, by M. Coolus, which was produced at the Théâtre des Escholiers, is a curious piece, original in some ways, but more suitable for a psychological essay than for dramatic performance. It exhibits that jealousy of an all-absorbing love, which becomes a positive mental malady, in the person of Germaine, the heroine. The four acts show the beginning, the progress, and the results of her efforts to appropriate to herself the soul of her husband, his thoughts, his very friendships and

pursuits. The moral is good, but is too much obtruded for stage success.

At the Théâtre Français, *La Vassale*, a piece in four acts by M. Jules Case, had a great success. It bears some resemblance to the above play, but the ending is very different, and recalls *The Doll's House* of Ibsen. Deschamps, the husband of the heroine, Louise, complains of his wife's coldness, and in revenge becomes unfaithful. Louise, in return, execrates her husband's authoritative ways, cries that she will be independent, earn her own livelihood, show that she is his equal, not his slave. She learns his unfaithfulness, and, with a deliberation which is quite revolting, retaliates by betraying him in her turn, and tells him she has done so. All this is not new, and is certainly not elevating when produced with such openness, we had almost said, such brutality. The end is a surprise. Deschamps reminds her of their only child: she proposes that, both having asserted their liberty, they should extend to one another a mutual pardon, and live for their child. We breathed more freely, expecting the curtain to fall on this comparatively peaceable pact! But suddenly Louise cries "No! if we loved each other the child might be happy, but we do not! Poor child, he would only suffer—I will go!" and she leaves her home and her child. Mlle. Brandès made one of her greatest successes as Louise, and M. Duflos played the difficult and ungrateful part of Deschamps with wonderful skill.

IN BERLIN.

The only piece that can claim attention this month is Herr Adolph Steinmann's four-act *Verboléne Feuchte*, produced at the Alexander Platz Theater on August 6th. There is in this play all the familiar figures of melodrama, including a hunchbacked and unsuccessful suitor, excellently portrayed by Herr Edmund, and a village pastor much liked in German plays of this calibre. Herr Wendt was, as always, picturesque and telling, and the high-flown periods incident to melodrama are made as natural as possible by the unusually good delivery he possesses. As the heroine, Frau Griep was dainty and captivating, and the play was received with all the approval indiscriminately bestowed by the people upon an example of what perhaps is their first favourite among different kinds of plays.

IN VIENNA.

Although the whole of the Viennese theatres are not yet in full swing, the first two weeks of the month of August saw the

opening of a few of them for their new season. In a city which prides itself on its love of classic music it was only appropriate that the Opera should lead the way. This it did by producing *Lohengrin* to a crowded house, with Herr Hesch playing the King, and Herr Winkelmann, Frau von Ehrenstein, Frau Kaulich, and Herr Felix in the other leading parts. The Deutches Volks Theater began with a series of Anzengruber's plays, which included *Der Pfarrer von Kirchfeld*, *Meineidbauer*, *Die Umgekehrte Freit* and *Der G'wissenswurm*. Among the other Viennese favourites which were put on the same stage in the course of the month were *Der Kleine Lord*, *Die Schlimmen Buben in der Schule*, and *Der Bureaukrat*. The Raimund Theater opened in the second week of the month with Karl Costa's *Bruder Martin*, and afterwards replaced it by *Trab*, *Trab*, and *Das Liebe Geld*.

IN MADRID.

The past month has not been quite so barren of new things as was July, though it can hardly be held to have brought forth anything of a very valuable character. *El Mentidero* is a very fair specimen of the productions which have been reserved for August. It is a work of a very light kind, consisting mainly of running commentary on political, municipal, and social events of the day, and having next to nothing to justify a claim to originality beyond a new application of the well-worn quips and sallies which hold its thin skeleton of plot together. A curious incident on the night of its first appearance seems to call for some notice. As the audience approached the doors of the Zarzuela, where the production took place, bills bearing the names of Señores Boada and Ribes were handed to them, through the medium of which they were informed that some time before *El Mentidero* was written these gentlemen had produced from their joint pens a work entitled *La Mariposa*, which was similar in nearly all its scenes to *El Mentidero*. In commenting upon this episode, a Madrid critic sarcastically defends the authors of the newer work from the imputation of having borrowed from *La Mariposa* by asserting that the material of *El Mentidero* comes from a far more remote period of "antiquity" than that of the other play. A new theatre which opened here in the course of the month, under the name of the Teatro Eldorado, made its bow to the public through the medium of a new comedy, entitled *El Pobre Diablo*. Owing to the weakness of the concluding scenes, *El Pobre Diablo* achieved no very great success. At the conclusion of the performance it

was announced that the authors were Señores Celso Lucio and Valverde. On a subsequent date a new farcical sketch, entitled *Fray Julio Ruiz*, was produced at the Eldorado with greater success than it would seem to merit. It displays the troubles of a man who, in the grip of a fearful attack of nightmare, imagines that he has turned monk, and sees pass before him various more or less irreverent and freely-conceived representations of monastic life. The performance of *El Arca de Noé*, which was announced to take place at the Principe Alfonso, had far more the character of a first night than of a *reprise*. The authors of this well-known and popular little comedy have been at work again upon it, and have so far altered it that there is very little of the original comedy left. Even the music which accompanies it is new. The changes seem, however, to have done no harm whatever to the reputation of the work or of its authors, for it was excellently received, and the new version promises to take as firm a hold on the lovers of light comedy as did the original work.

IN NEW YORK.

One of the most successful of travesties produced recently in Paris is the *Le Petit Faust* of M. Halévy, but *Very Little Faust*—as the American adaptation is called—seems scarcely likely to repeat here its original good fortune. M. R. F. Carroll is the author, and M. Hervé and M. F. S. Eustis have provided the music. Miss Dorothy Morton as Marguerite was the best of a mediocre cast. *The Whirl of the Town* shows no sign of lessening popular favour, and is expected to retain the Casino boards until at least towards the end of the month. Nearly all the theatres are announcing their autumn attractions, many of which are to be begun during the next four weeks.

Echoes from the Green Room.

Sir Henry Irving, after a holiday in Kent and Norfolk, is about to begin a provincial tour, at the end of which, probably in December, he will reappear at the Lyceum.

Sir Squire Bancroft was formally knighted at Osborne on August 18.

Mr. Willard, who has been staying at rural Banstead, returns to America this autumn, taking with him, as we have already announced, *The Physician*.

Mr. Hare has two new plays in hand—*The Master*, by Mr. Stuart Ogilvie, and another (as yet unnamed) by Miss Martha Morton, the American writer. The latter will be produced during Mr. Hare's autumn tour.

Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, after a holiday in the north, are about to start upon another provincial tour, during which they will produce two new comedies.

The White Heather: A Story of Moor and City, is the title now selected for the Autumn drama at Drury Lane.

Mr. Forbes Robertson's revival at the Lyceum of *Hamlet* is expected to take place in the second week of September, Mrs. Patrick Campbell appearing as Ophelia, Mr. J. H. Barnes as Polonius, Mr. Cooper Cliffe as the King, and Miss Granville as the Queen.

Mr. Tree closed Her Majesty's Theatre on August 13, and was soon afterwards to be found yachting with the Duke of Manchester. Next summer he exchanges theatres with Mme. Bernhardt.

The Royal Opera season ended in the last week of July, after a course of gratifying prosperity. No new masterpiece or great singer has appeared, but the general character of the performances was markedly high. Mr. Maurice Grau has done well.

The play which Mr. Comyns Carr and Mr. Haddon Chambers have written for the Adelphi will probably appear in a week or two. The most effective scene in it is that of the Duchess of Richmond's ball on the eve of Waterloo.

Mr. Alexander, refreshed by an excursion into the Austrian Tyrol, is hard at work upon his revival of *Henry V.* Mr. Justin H. M'Carthy has rewritten for him *The Duke's Motto*, in which Charles Fechter achieved so distinct a success.

During Mr. Tree's provincial tour, Mr. Hedmont will produce at Her Majesty's Theatre a new romantic opera, *Rip Van Winkle*, by Mr. Akerman and Mr. Leoni.

M. Jean de Reszke, with his wife and brother, is cycling in Poland. On the morning before a performance he spends an hour or two in such exercise, holding that the vocal passages are effectually cleared by such means. In the same way, Mme. Patti, *pour se préparer au combat*,

practices scales for an hour or more after breakfast as the best remedy for a husky voice.

BEFORE leaving London Mme. Bernhardt was asked whom she considered the first of living actresses. "Ellen Terry and Réjane" she replied without hesitation.

AT the request of the Prince of Wales, Mme. Bernhardt is to add Hamlet to her répertoire. She will study the part in her pretty cottage at Belle-Isle, off the coast of Brittany, where she is seeking partial rest. Hamlet will not be her first essay on the stage in male costume. About twenty years ago, for instance, she was seen at the Comédie Française as Racine in a small piece by M. Paul Giffard.

MME. BERNHARDT is still a self-denying patriot. She denies the story that she is thinking of appearing in Germany. While believing that the Germans have many excellent qualities, she "cannot forget they are, or were, the enemies of France."

SIGNORA DUSE, at the risk of offending most of her Parisian admirers, has signed a contract to appear in Berlin.

MR. JOHN COLEMAN, we are glad to hear, is about to return to the stage, intending particularly to appear in a revival of *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, and in an adaptation of Charles Reade's *Griffith Gaunt*. "I have always thought the latter," he recently said to an interviewer, "to be the best novel my friend Reade ever wrote, and Swinburne has described it as the finest thing in English fiction. To me the play is almost equally great, yet it has never been acted. Strangely enough, I had arranged with Reade for the production of it, acting the leading part, just before he went to Paris; but to my great grief Reade came home to die, and on his death the production was abandoned. Why has it never been taken up by any other managers? Well, you see, it is largely a woman's play—a story of women's jealousies, vanities, and ambitions. But I shall do it myself directly." Mr. Coleman thinks that *Griffith Gaunt* should be as great a success as *Never Too Late to Mend*, which, after being rejected by all the London managers, proved a great success.

ONE of our contributors writes:—The "Strange Story" revealed in the last issue of *The Theatre* by M.—in whom a few sagacious readers have recognised a distinguished writer—is not the first of its kind. In 1879, Dr. Augustin Jessopp, the antiquary, drove over from Norwich to Mannington Hall, the residence of Lord Orford, and passed the night in the library there to take notes from rare books. "I was beginning to think," he wrote to the *Athenæum*, "that my work was drawing to a close, when, *as I was actually writing*, I saw a large white hand within a foot of my elbow. Turning my head, there sat a figure of a somewhat large man, with his back to the fire, bending slightly over the table, and apparently examining the pile of books that I had been at work upon. The man's face was turned away from me, but I saw his closely-cut reddish brown hair, his ear and shaved cheek, the eyebrow, the corner of the right eye, the side of the forehead, and the large high cheek-bone. He was dressed in what I can only describe as a kind of ecclesiastical habit of thick corded silk or some such material, close up to the throat, and a narrow rim or edging of about an inch broad, of satin or velvet, serving as a stand-up collar, and fitting close to the chin. The right hand, which had first attracted my attention, was clasping, without any

great pressure, the left hand; both hands were in perfect repose, and the large blue veins of the right hand were conspicuous. I remember thinking that the hand was like the hand of Velasquez's magnificent 'Dead Knight' in the National Gallery. I shut the book and threw it on the table: it made a slight noise as it fell; the figure vanished."

As far back as 1892 Lord Dysart made a vigorous protest against compulsory evening dress at the Opera. He now returns to the charge. "In view," he says, "of the progress which has been made during the last five years, this ridiculous and inconvenient custom is now less defensible than ever. Those who know will, I think, agree with me that it is not due to the efforts of Mayfair and Belgravia that Beethoven and Wagner have recently come to the front; and I am, therefore, at a loss to understand why this section of society should have the power to enforce their prejudice to the inconvenience of others. There are few to whom I have spoken on the subject, especially of those in the musical and artistic world, who are not of my opinion. With the opera beginning, as it sometimes does, as early as seven o'clock, the inconvenience of evening dress (especially to those who, like myself, do not reside in London) ought to be apparent even to the most bigoted of its devotees. One might have thought that what is considered good enough in every Continental capital, where the opera-house is an ornament in the fashionable quarter, should be sufficiently correct in a capital where the opera-house is situated in a neighbourhood reeking with cabbage leaves and other market refuse. To me it is a question whether the opera, from an educational point of view, is not even more important than the London School Board, and it should, therefore, be thoroughly democratic; and, if this be the case, I cannot maintain too strongly that the future of the opera in England, as everywhere else, depends on the due recognition of this principle. If Vanity Fair imagines that its privileges are being tampered with, I would suggest that one or two days in the week should be set aside for the star system and diamonds, and their admirers, who do not go to the opera at seven o'clock, to have their full sway. Personally I believe that many are kept away from the opera by reason of this custom, which, whatever its merits half a century ago, is now antiquated."

THE only living representative of the family of Mme. Sans-Gêne has been discovered by an enterprising news agency in an aged lady near Paris. She is a niece of the Maréchale, and has many stories to tell, of course from hearsay, of her aunt. She has never seen *Mme. Sans-Gêne*, but has carefully read every accessible account of the play.

THE stage has acquired a most promising recruit in Miss Mackenzie, daughter of Sir A. C. Mackenzie, Principal of the Royal Academy of Music. She is at present touring in the provinces.

MISS JULIA ARTHUR has related to the *New York Herald* some of her impressions and experiences in London. As to her London engagement she says:—"The pleasure and the honour of association with the actors of the Lyceum Theatre were most gratifying and beneficial to me. I cannot pay too hearty a tribute to the high artistic aim, the earnest determination to follow only the best models, that are always observable on Sir Henry Irving's stage." Comparing the London stage with that of New York, she adds:—"Everything is done more after rule, more stage etiquette is observed, there is more reverence for tradition than the average American

actor is accustomed to. And these stage laws are strictly adhered to. I can gladly bear testimony to one point in particular in which the Lyceum is far ahead of the average American theatre. While there is a divinity that doth hedge about an English star, as well as a king, there is between the company and the star an artistic 'fellow-feeling' that makes them wondrous kind, that makes all the members of the company work harmoniously to one common end, that blots out the idea that the 'centre of the stage' is in the indisputable possession of the star—indeed, that there is any centre of the stage. And there is no belief in the tradition that 'the King can do no wrong,' that the star's way is always the right way. I have known both Sir Henry and Miss Terry to act readily upon suggestions, that if offered to the average American stellar divinity, would have been frowned upon as impertinence from a mere mortal."

Echoes of the Jubilee were to be heard long after that auspicious event. Mr. Willard had a bonfire party at Banstead in honour of his American triumphs. Mr. Louis N. Parker, part author of *Rosemary*, was the only person who took a comic view of the Jubilee. He decorated his house with a transparency, reading "Ve Are a Happy Family! V. R. V. R. V. R." This joke, it is grimly remarked, may cost him a knighthood.

The Tennyson Beacon, erected on High Down, Freshwater, in memory of the late Poet Laureate, and in close proximity to his Isle of Wight home, was lately unveiled by Dean Bradley, a special prayer of dedication being read by the Archbishop of Canterbury. "By the invitation of Lord Tennyson," writes a special correspondent, "I afterwards visited the house at Farringford, and was by him conducted through his father's favourite rooms. Everything is cherished as the poet left it. Everywhere some favourite book or picture meets the eye and revives the recollection of some passage in his poems. A statuette of Wordsworth, a portrait of Carlyle, a mask of Shakspere or Dante for a moment arrest the attention, which is again diverted by some personal relic of the dead poet. The study where he mused, the large silent room where he paced to and fro lost in abstraction, are preserved with filial piety. It is as if they waited for his returning presence. In the beautiful grounds around the house every object seems familiar. One does not realise, until one visits Tennyson's home, how large was the part played by that home in begetting the children of his fancy. It is the ideal habitation of a poet, with its fair gardens, its glimpses of the sea, and its sheltering down above it."

Sir Henry Irving has received the following letter from Mr. J. Y. Macalister, honorary secretary-general of the International Library Conference:—"I am directed by the President and Committee of the Second International Library Conference to convey to you their most hearty thanks for the unique generosity displayed by you to the members of this Conference in inviting them to a special performance of *The Merchant of Venice*. Permit me to assure you that that evening will long be remembered by all of us as the most interesting and delightful event of the Conference. We have reason to believe that such an event is unique in the history of conferences, and, apart from the pleasure the members individually enjoyed, they keenly appreciate the fact that the movement they all have at heart should have been so handsomely recognised by you. We like to think that our objects are the same, and that the drama, as interpreted by you, and public libraries are the most potent modern agencies for the elevation and

culture of the people. Will you kindly allow us to take this opportunity of also thanking Miss Terry for the part she took in the event, and convey to her this testimony of our warm appreciation?"

THE knighthood of Sir Squire Bancroft has been heard of with general satisfaction by theatrical circles in the United States. "The stage," remarks the *New York Mirror*, "has achieved its place in spite of opposition that never was directed toward any other factor of civilisation. One of the noblest acts of a Queen in whose honour the civilised world has recently gathered—a ruler whose own happy appreciation of the theatre has never been denied or dissembled—was her formal rebuke of prejudice in honouring Irving. The title she bestowed upon the player was of far less significance in its direct application than in its indirect meaning. It symbolised the beginning of the end of bigotry as to the stage."

MR. GRUNDY is evidently sore about the remarks made by Mr. Edward Morton in *The Theatre* for July as to the propriety of adapters appearing before the curtain in response to calls for the author. It seems to him "to be a question of manners. If the summons of the audience is not ironical, the adapter who refuses to obey it is guilty of discourtesy. It appears to be not generally known that the refusal of an author of any description to accept 'a call' is resented by his interpreters. Of the second play of mine which obtained production I thought so poorly that I declined to go before the public. 'Mr. Grundy,' said the eminent lady who had done me the honour to take part in it, in accents that ring terribly in my ears to this day, 'if your play is good enough for me to appear in it is good enough for you to acknowledge.'"

MR. MORTON, who is one of our keenest dramatic critics, has no difficulty, of course, in dealing with Mr. Grundy's position in the matter. "The audience who applaud the translation of a play," he says, "owe less to a translator than to the work he translates. I put it plainly to Mr. Grundy, if he translated French novels instead of French plays, would he regard himself as the author of—say, *Monte Cristo* or *The Three Musketeers?*"

LET us hear no more of the old cry that American plays and players have to encounter a prejudice in London. The success of *Secret Service* is one of a hundred and more proofs to the contrary. Mr. Edwin H. Law writes to the *New York Dramatic Mirror*: "I saw *Secret Service* last night on its return to the Adelphi. The house was packed, and I assure you I never heard more enthusiasm from an audience which was purely English. Not a point was lost, and the Southern dialect was understood. Shouts of 'Bravo!' came frequently from pit and gallery, and that surprised me greatly, as I had imagined the play would be over the heads of that portion of the house. There were three curtain calls for Mr. Gillette at the end of the play."

MR. GILLETTE and his *Secret Service* company have returned to New York.

A BOOK that students of our great dramatist should not miss is Mr. T. F. Ordish's *Shakspere's London*. It is a very interesting little volume, and Mr. Ordish, unlike too many Shaksperean commentators, is not a faddist. He makes his guesses at various obscure points, it is true; but they are shrewd and intelligent guesses for the most part, and he has the merit of avoiding dulness all through the various chapters in which he builds up for us the London of the 16th century, and shows how the poet was influenced by his surroundings.

Visitors to Stratford-on-Avon would do well to take with them a cheap guide just issued by Mr. H. Snowden Ward and Mrs. Catharine Ward Ward, the author of "Shakspere's Town and Times." It is one of the best works of its kind, and has an abundance of illustrations. Moreover, it contains chapters on Warwick, Kenilworth, and the Shakspere country generally.

The freehold of the church in Maiden-lane, Strand, is to be purchased as a memorial to Mr. Agostino Gatti, who, like his brother, extended to it a generous support.

La Vie de Bohéme is to be revived in a week or two at the Comédie Française.

There has been a funny duel in Paris between M. Catulle Mendés and M. Lugne Poë, the former taking to heart some remarks by the latter, a director of the new Théâtre Libre, in an article on the contemporary dramatists of France. Like so many contests of the kind, the affair came to nothing. M. Poë, we are told, showed great ingenuity in parrying his adversary's thrusts, and his skill in jumping backward was so prodigious that M. Mendés finally threw away his sword in disgust.

The announcement that M. Alphonse Daudet's *Sapho* is to come out as an opera next winter, with Mme. Calvé in the title-part, has given an enormous impetus to the sale of that novel in Paris. The adapters, MM. Cain and Bernide, have kept rather closely to their original.

M. Coquelin will begin at the Porte St. Martin with *La Mort de Hoche*, by M. Paul Déroulède, but will not appear in it himself. Other pieces accepted by him are *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *L'Aventurier*, by M. Jules Lemaître, and *Valcombra*, by M. Paul Alexis, the last of which is political enough to be suggestive of Gambetta.

There will probably be a revival at the Gymnase of *La Jeunesse de Louis Quatorze*, as revised by the author's son, the late Alexandre Dumas.

Another theatre with a purpose—namely, the Théâtre International, which has recently been founded—seems to have met with success. The Théâtre International's mission is to present to the French public the best dramatic output of other countries, particularly Spain and Italy. Its plans for next season have already been decided upon. One new play a month will be produced, and in addition to modern plays there will be produced *Le Séducteur de Séville*, by Tirso de Molina.

M. Martel, of Paris, is spending the summer vacation with a number of his comrades in a new way. They will travel in a finely-appointed four-in-hand from town to town, followed by an enormous van which will carry a tent, scenery, electric light plant, and all the equipments of a portable theatre. The pieces to be given are one-act comedies, operas, and various dramatic fragments suitable to such an enterprise.

The late Alexandre Dumas had splendid teeth, and one more than usually allotted to man, for he had thirty-three. The extra one was one of the first teeth (called milk teeth in French), and he kept it to the end.

Mme. Kalb, M. Coquelin the younger, and other members of the Comédie Française are on tour in the south of France, taking with them *Le Barbier de Pézenas*, by M. Emile Blémont. As may be supposed, this piece has reference to a passage in the early life of a great dramatist-actor-manager, Molière. "In those days, cafés not having been invented, the

favourite resort of the gossips," we are told by Mr. Frederick Hawkins in his history of the French stage, "was the barber's. Molière, ever ready to amplify his knowledge of human nature, would repair to such places on market-days in his most observant mood; and an antique armchair, which he is said to have occupied in the shop of a popular Figaro at Pézenas, by name Gély, is still preserved in the town with pious care."

Herr Sudermann's latest play, *Johannes*, dealing with the history of John the Baptist, has been prohibited by the Berlin censorship, though it is marked throughout by the most reverent spirit. Scriptural subjects are not countenanced by the Kaiser, the effect of the Bavarian Passion Play notwithstanding. *Johannes* was to have been produced at the Deutsches, Berlin, with Herr Kainz in the title-part.

The representations of the Passion Play by the peasants of Oberammergau take place every ten years. According to custom, the next would come in 1900. But that year has been fixed for the Paris Exhibition; and the committee of management, fearing that this threatened competition between the Church and the world would injure the interests of the former, have petitioned the Prince Regent of Bavaria to alter the date of the next revival to 1899 or 1901. Not a few of the Bavarian papers have resented this step on the part of the "Oberammergeier," whom they describe as animated by the lowest thirst for lucre. On the other hand, the *Poste Catholique* of Augsburg holds that these religious solemnities "would be a valuable antidote to the frivolous amusements of the Modern Babylon." For ourselves, we think that these "rapacious peasants," as they were called the other day, need not despair. If the two things happen simultaneously, swarms of visitors to the "Modern Babylon" will go on to the Passion Play, which has a fascination peculiar to itself.

Bayreuth, favoured by the splendid weather, is having a season of unusual prosperity. The valley is bathed in bright light, and the crowd, increasing every day, makes large pilgrimages to the Wagner Theatre.

Adam Asnye, the greatest of contemporary Polish poets, died at Cracow on August 2, in his sixtieth year. He excelled chiefly in lyrical pieces, but three plays of his—*The Jew*, *Cola Rienzi*, and *Kiejstut*, the last a tragedy from Lithuanian history—are likely to be remembered. He was educated at Warsaw, Breslau, and Heidelberg.

Signor Verdi, though extremely old, is still hale and hearty. Not long ago he stood against a pillar to hear a concert. A companion suggested that he should take a short rest. "I am not so weak," he replied, "as you think. Am I dead? Do they want to bury me now?"

Yet another anecdote of the great composer. He attended a rehearsal of a new opera by Signor Leoncavallo. The latter was personally unknown to him, and was naturally anxious to know what he thought of the work. When the end came he asked a friend, "Which is Leoncavallo?' "The one with the light overcoat," was the reply. "Ah! the one with the light overcoat, eh?" said Verdi slowly. He turned, jammed his hat over his brows, and stalked away without uttering another word.

Signor Leoncavallo, as we have already announced, is turning *Trilby* into an opera, writing his own libretto. He has never seen any dramatic version of the novel, nor does he wish to. He prefers to follow his own ideas about the selection of the dramatic elements of the romance. It seems that he knows the story only through a French translation.

Signor Zacconi has signed a two years' contract to go on a tour of the chief cities of the United States, with a company of his own selection.

Signor H. Rossi, a brother of Ernesto Rossi, has died at the age of seventy-eight. He was manager of several theatres in South America. Cesare Rossi now is the last remaining actor of these well-known brothers.

Mozart and Haydn are not in favour at the Vatican. The Pope has condemned the violin as "sensual and profane." He approves other kinds of music, but thinks they should be restricted to the harp and the gentler wind instruments. Female voices, too, are to be excluded from Roman Catholic services. Until a few years ago, it may be remembered, instrumental music was a bone of bitter contention at the yearly Synod of the Churches, especially in Ireland. Some speakers even went so far as to describe music altogether as a work of the Devil.

Mr. Charles Frohman, who has returned to New York, announces that he will have five plays running in London next season, and will engage his companies for both England and America. His London plays will be *Secret Service*, *Never Again*, *The Charity Ball*, *The Good Mr. Best*, and *Too Much Johnson*. A new play by Mr. Potter, called *The Conquerors*, will be produced simultaneously in New York and in England. For America he has secured *In Town*, *The Triumph of the Philistines*, *A Marriage of Convenience*, *Phorso*, *The Tree of Knowledge*, and other plays.

Mr. Daniel Frohman opens his Lyceum Theatre season in New York on September 1 with *Change Alley*, by Mr. Louis N. Parker and Mr. Murray Carson. This is to be followed by *The Princess and the Butterfly*—with alterations.

Mr. Mansfield begins his season at the Fifth Avenue Theatre on October 4. Among the new plays occupying his time is one by Mr. George Bernard Shaw, entitled *The Devil's Disciple*. It is a drama of the American Revolution, the scene being laid in New Hampshire about the time of Burgoyne's surrender.

Mr. Richard Mansfield, who is at Blue Hill, Maine, is reported to be writing an autobiography, a book which may be expected to arouse no little interest and discussion. Nineteen years ago, as the *Mirror* points out, he contributed reminiscences of his mother, Mme. Rudersdorff, to *The Theatre*.

Miss Marie Tempest is engaged by Mr. Charles Frohman for a tour of the United States next season.

Miss Julia Arthur has gone on a visit to Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett at Washington, where they will discuss the adaptation by the latter of her *Lady of Quality*. The actress should make an excellent Florinda in this work.

Our Watch Tower.

EDUCATING THE SUBURBS.

DURING the first half of the past month, Sir Henry Irving, supported by the Lyceum company (minus Miss Terry), paid a brief visit to the outlying and suburban theatres as represented by the Borough, Stratford, E., and the Metropole, Camberwell, S.E. Some years ago Sir Henry fulfilled an engagement at the Standard Theatre, and he has played on two occasions at the Grand, Islington. The present, however, is the first occasion on which he has gone so far east and so far south, making the two places visited the starting points of his autumnal tour.

The event has much significance. It shows, to begin with, in the most practical manner, how entirely undisturbed is our leading actor-manager by the prophecy, so freely made, that the growth of the outlying and suburban theatres will impair, if it does not destroy, the prosperity of those in the west-end. Sir Henry has, indeed, been interviewed on the subject, and has frankly and tersely declared his belief that "the influence of the suburban theatre is all for good." "The more theatres there are—the more people are in the habit of going to them—the better it is all round." And again: "The more good theatres there are, and the more good plays, the better it is for us all, and for the general taste for intellectual and wholesome recreation." "Ah, but," say some, "don't you think that if west-end attractions are taken bodily to the north and east and south, the northern and eastern and southern playgoer will be inclined to wait till they come to him, and that so the west-end playhouses will be deprived of a portion of their existing *clientèle*?" "Why, no," replies Sir Henry; "I do not think that the people of the suburbs who desire to see a popular play will wait until it is taken to their doorsteps before doing so. Much more likely is it that they will visit the play at the west-end theatre, and, if they like it, see it again when it is played in their locality."

The truth is, we hold, that the new outlying and suburban playhouses, so far from intercepting and holding the theatre-lovers who have hitherto been patrons of the west-end establish-

ments, have struck a wholly new vein in the enormous population of London. We think it likely that for some time to come the regular playgoer, and especially the better-to-do regular playgoer, who happens to live in the suburbs, will rather look askance at his local playhouse, considering it better "form" to go as before to "the centre" for his dramatic instruction and entertainment. The suburban houses, we think it likely, will have to struggle, in a sense, against this species of neglect on the part of the "aristocracy" of the neighbourhood. And we say "in a sense," because, as a matter of fact, there can be no actual "struggle" when, as in most cases, the local theatres are filled night after night with good paying audiences. The suburban theatres, we believe, are being supported almost wholly by a public which they have created for themselves—which hitherto has not gone to the west-end houses at all, or, if at all, occasionally only. It is among the lower-middle and the lower classes that the suburban managers, we feel sure, are finding (save on such exceptional occasions as a visit from the Lyceum company) their steadiest adherents. The local tradesman, rather than take his wife and daughter to the pit or upper circle of a west-end theatre, has preferred to stay at home and nurse his dignity. Now, for the sum which he would have to pay for a seat in a west-end upper circle or pit, he can disport himself in the stalls or dress-circle of his local playhouse. This he can do, moreover, without incurring the cost of railway, cab, or 'bus. In the same way with the local shop assistants and even humbler members of the community. Formerly a night at the theatre was necessarily a rare (if not an impossible) event for them. Now the presence of a playhouse at their very door enables them to indulge their theatrical tastes at least once a week, if not more often.

In other words, the chief result, so far, of the spread of local theatres has been to increase to a remarkable extent the number of habitual playgoers within the metropolitan limits. There were thousands whom circumstances withheld from the central playhouses; but now that other playhouses have been set down in their midst, these thousands hasten to fill them and support them. Meanwhile, the local theatre-patron is undergoing, unconsciously, an education in dramatic art. Every week he sees a new play or a fresh repertory of plays (save when the succession of novelties is interrupted by the return of overwhelming favourites). The appetite grows by what it feeds on. In time the suburban playgoer will have acquired preferences to which he will expect his local manager to respond. This will

mean a gradual raising of the level of entertainments submitted to the local publics, and this, again, will mean much to the advantage of the higher interests of the drama. Among the mass of playgoers in the outlying districts there will arise, in due course, a percentage, growingly large, of enthusiasts, who, while not ignoring the local bill of fare, will, as frequently as possible, journey into town to study dramatic novelties at their birthplaces. It is probable that amid the thousands who went to see Sir Henry Irving at Stratford and at Camberwell there were many hundreds whom fate had prevented from seeing him before. Is it to be supposed that these hundreds will rest quietly at home until fate brings him to them again? It is not conceivable. They will take the very earliest chance they have of renewing acquaintance with him in the Lyceum itself.

We may expect, indeed, that the example set by the head of the profession will be followed before long by other actor-managers of eminence, who by-and-by will make it a rule to include certain of the suburban houses in their autumnal tour. Nay, if big paying audiences are to be found in such localities as Stratford and Camberwell, why not make the outlying theatres themselves the successive milestones of an annual journey? How much smaller must be the expense of a tour round London than that of a tour round the United Kingdom! How much greater, too, the comfort of the former! It may be some years before Sir Henry Irving, and Mr. Wyndham, and Mr. Tree, and Mr. Alexander can see their way to a prolonged suburban progress; but that the day will come is virtually certain. And in the meantime, the suburbs are already sufficiently well "educated" to justify less important *entrepreneurs* than the above in inviting them to pronounce verdicts on new plays. For instance, Mr. Leonard Boyne, unable to obtain a suitable west-end theatre for the exploitation of *The Trainer's Daughter*, will produce it at the Shakspere Theatre, Clapham-junction, and thence take it to three other playhouses in the outlying districts. Thus will the local temples of the art add to their services to the drama generally. They will increase the available opportunities for testing the value of new plays, just as they are already supplying openings for the many players who have been waiting vainly for employment. No doubt, it may be possible to over-multiply the suburban theatres, and so create repletion and disaster; but if the supply is carefully adjusted to the demand, then, to use Sir Henry Irving's phrase, the movement will be altogether "for good."

Portraits.

MISS LETTY LIND.

IF it were necessary to define in precise terms the nature of the influence which Miss Letty Lind exercises over the public, the only possible answer would be that she possesses in the highest degree the indefinable quality of charm. Her acting is of the purely natural order; apparently she makes no effort to obtain her effects, and yet how seldom does she fail in securing them. Alike of her dancing and of her singing the same thing might be said. Gifted with the merest thread of a voice, she succeeds at once in captivating her listeners by the sweetness of her manner and the almost childlike simplicity of her method. In this she resembles the great French artist, Mme. Chaumont. In both instances the style is the woman. By the least artful means Miss Lind betrays her supremacy; she has the faculty of creating a deep impression without suggesting how it is arrived at. As a dancer she is in her own particular line unrivalled; but here again she triumphs simply by virtue of absolute naturalness. Beginning as a concert singer, Miss Lind, a successful dancer from her childhood, soon turned her thoughts to the stage. Armed with a letter of introduction, she applied to Mr. Charles Wyndham, who engaged her to understudy Betsy in the lively farce of that name. Before long she was selected by Mr. Robert Buchanan to appear in a play he was on the point of bringing out. During the performance something went wrong, with the result that an ugly "wait" was inevitable. "Might not Miss Lind fill it up?" asked the distracted author. Responding to the call, she recited *The Language of Love*, which depends for its effect upon imitations of animals, in the happiest way. After two or three provincial tours, in the course of which she displayed her skill as a dancer for the first time in public, she went to Drury Lane, at a special invitation from Sir Augustus Harris, to play in his pantomime, still well remembered by those who saw it, of *Puss in Boots*. Next came a long engagement—to be interrupted by a serious illness—with Mr. Edwardes's Company at the Gaiety. Her latest triumph has been as Molly Seamore in *The Geisha*. Here, as we remarked at the time, she is at her best—the epitome, in other words, of all that is bright and winsome. And that, we may be sure, is the verdict of all playgoers to-day.

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MISS LETTY LIND.

The Round Table.

HAMLETS WITH DIFFERENCES.

By Walter Herries Pollock.

So many leading actors, so many Hamlets; and in the last thirty and odd years the playgoers of London have had excellent chances of seeing the Prince of Denmark through mediums of various nationalities. Fechter, the first Hamlet within that time at least who played the part in what was practically a foreign tongue to him, was of mixed nationality, and was born in Hanway-yard, Oxford-street. Salvini and Rossi were filled with pure Italian impulse and turn of thought. Mounet-Sully's genius is of the Midi, but having no national prejudice in his art he took certain hints from Henry Irving. Edwin Booth's graceful restlessness, notably in the "nunnery" scene, might be traced by a fanciful critic to his American nervousness of temperament. I cannot remember that *Hamlet* was given by the Saxe-Meiningen troupe when in London. If so, it was one of the few performances of theirs which I missed; but I remember well a performance in the old Hof Theater (soon afterwards burnt down) in Dresden, which, for finish and completeness, allied with a fine simplicity, could hardly be surpassed. Dettmer, who died with his reputation still at its height, had succeeded Devrient as *premier rôle*, and was, by the way, as good in several parts of comedy as he was in tragedy. Ophelia was played by Frau Ulrich, whose performance in this, as in the Gretchen of *Faust*, was a wonder of unaffected and seemingly spontaneous pathos. Jaffé, who afterwards went to the Burg Theater at Vienna, and whose Shylock and Mephistopheles were in the first rank, as were his "character parts" (among them

Warren Hastings), enacted Polonius as an old courtier with just the hint of tediousness which was never tedious in the watching. I think the distinguished actress who had preceded Frau Ulrich in young heroines, and who had carried on her reputation into older parts (I forget her name for the moment), played the Queen, and I recollect that this, and the King, and, indeed, all the lesser parts, were given with a conviction on the part of the actors that communicated itself to the audience in a marked degree. So strong, indeed, was this responsive feeling, this mutual understanding between the people on either side of the footlights, that an incident, ludicrous enough in its naked essence, did not raise or suggest a titter in any part of the full audience, native or foreign. This was on the first disappearance of the Ghost, which was effected down a trap in the middle of the stage. Dettmer, as Hamlet, leant eagerly forward, as though to catch the very last of the departing Figure, and was so carried away by the very cunning of the scene that he allowed his inky cloak to be caught in the trap as it closed, and was forced to remain in his intent attitude until an unseen carpenter released him. In the respectful silence with which this mishap was received there was no savour of the pedantic German "goodboyism" which is often deliciously absurd. It was a real attention to the poet and his interpreter which raised the onlookers into a sphere of fantasy when humanity touched the world beyond, and when there was no room for thought of a mere mundane and trivial misadventure. The whole performance of the play was harmonising with this one instance of complete devotion on the part of actors and spectators to the fit understanding and accomplishment of a mighty task. The scenery and stage-setting were by no means elaborate, but were most thoroughly artistic from both as to point and as to furnishing. One sunset scene in particular, merely a back-cloth, would have done credit to Stanfield. This was the only performance in which I have seen the play closed as it is written, with the last words spoken by Fortinbras—

"Go, bid the soldiers shoot."

[A dead march. Exeunt, bearing off the dead bodies; after which a peal of ordnance is shot off.]

The curtain fell as Fortinbras headed a march off, and it was properly left to be inferred that the dead bodies would be duly removed. I do not think that Fortinbras had appeared before—I am indeed tolerably sure that my recollection is right as to this—but there was certainly no sense of any jarring unexpectedness in his

appearance to conclude the history. There is, indeed, nothing to jar in it, rightly considered. Hamlet is gone, but Denmark remains; and Fortinbras has come to save her. With the insight of a born leader, he has summed up Hamlet in the pregnant words "for he was likely, had he been put on, t'have proved most royally," and what more fitting than that the tragic ending caused by the want of "putting on" should be so celebrated by the warrior who arrives to take what should have been Hamlet's place? In the present conditions of the London stage there is, of course, a practical, too practical, difficulty about ending the play in this fashion. For all I know at the moment of writing, this difficulty may have been triumphantly overcome at the Lyceum; but it lies in the fact that Fortinbras, to give a due effect to the scene, should be played by an actor of high attainments, and in the case of the play being mounted for a "run" this, of course, may not be easy to compass.

I have dwelt thus long on *Hamlet* as I saw it in the old Dresden Theatre, not because Dettmer, fine actor as he was, was the best Hamlet I have seen, but because it is a rare experience to see a representation of the great play so complete at every point both of acting and of setting that it leaves an undying impression of its harmonious excellence as a whole, with, of course, certain points that "stick fiery off" in the rendering of the chief characters. Dettmer did not strike out any novel "business." If my memory serves me, he saw the pictures of the two kings in his mind's eye; but this matter has never seemed to me of the least importance. Considered too curiously, it might lead to the suggestion that the portraits should be on the fourth wall of the room, which, by an ingenious manipulation of mirrors, should be made visible to the spectator.

As to the "business" of other Hamlets, among many points which Fechter made, I remember notably the manner in which, in the "closet scene," as he entered, he laid his sword ready to be drawn on the table. This, I think, was finely and legitimately suggestive, without taking him at all into the mere trickery of effect which disfigured parts of his very unequal Othello. His treatment of the portraits (miniatures) was undeniably pathetic, and surely to be preferred to the Italian method of actually stamping upon the effigy of Claudius, an action that savoured more of Othello conceived as a pure African than of the Scholar-Prince. It is reported of Charles Kean in the same scene that he followed (literally) in his father's footsteps at one point. According to Mr. John Coleman, in "Players and Playwrights I

Have Known," "absurd as it may appear in description, nothing more picturesque or striking could be imagined, than his sliding down the stage to the footlights in the Closet Scene," as he exclaimed: "Nay, I know not. Is it the King?" a question, by the way, asked by Fechter in a very tumult of triumphant expectation, which gave a special emphasis to the later address to Polonius's dead body. Salvini's Hamlet is as well remembered with its merits and defects as is Edwin Booth's, while of Rossi's it can but be said that, as with his Romeo, its real beauty of thought was but too much obscured by an utter absence of grace in figure. M. Mounet-Sully's Hamlet was seen under great disadvantages in London, but even so the sweeping poetry and passion which made its key-note were apparent enough.

The fencing scene is a curious touch-stone of temperament in various Hamlets. The mere stage direction, "*in scuffling they change rapiers*," is at once simple and confusing, until one follows it up to its probable, almost its certain origin. When, as has been usual, as it would seem from the days of Garrick downwards, modern sword play is fitted or unfitted to the scene, the thing becomes baffling, since to "scuffle" in a courteous assault is inadmissible. Various actors have got round the difficulty in various ways. There is the method, perhaps the most plausible of these circumventions, according to which Hamlet, having disarmed Laertes on the low line, in his eagerness to be at him again, tosses his own rapier to Laertes, while he rapidly catches up the blade that has fallen. There is the more elaborate variant in this, in which Hamlet parries a lunge on the high line with so sharp a *demi-cercle* that Laertes's sword flies upwards and is caught as it comes down by Hamlet, who then tosses his own blade to Laertes. Very different is the way taken by Signor Salvini and others. The Italian Hamlet, pricked by Laertes's point, clapped his hand upon the wound, looked at his fingers, perceived them, as one felt, to be blood-stained, and then, again engaging Laertes, disarmed him in *seconde*. Upon this he placed his foot deliberately on Laertes's blade, and handed Laertes his own weapon with a mocking courtesy. This is a calculating, cold-blooded retort on Laertes's treachery, which seems to me out of Hamlet's character, take it how you will. What seems the true explanation demands a rather technical explanation, and is more fit for a brief monograph than for detailed description here. That great master of fence, M. Vigeant, came near it when he arranged the scene for the Français, but hardly satisfied all conditions. The

clue to it is found in Esric's distinct statement that rapier *and dagger*, the regular duelling implements of the Elizabethan age, were Laertes's weapons.

As with the two pictures in the "closet scene," so with the appearance of the Ghost, whom some actors have preferred to see on that occasion only with the mind's eye. Haydon, the ill-fated painter, who went with Wilkie and another friend to see Ducis's adaptation of *Hamlet* at Versailles in 1814, wrote thus of this scene after condemning Ducis with his usual vehemence: "But when Hamlet was talking to his mother, and fancied for a moment he saw his father's ghost, Talma was terrific—it really shook my orthodoxy. The Ghost was not seen—there was really a cause for this stupor, and his talking as if he only saw what we did not frightened us all."

THE RESUSCITATION OF FORTINBRAS.

By F. J. Furnivall.

THE student of Shakspere heard with interest that Mr. Forbes Robertson meant to revive Fortinbras in his putting of *Hamlet* on the stage again. Unlike those actors who care for Shakspere only so far as he will give them a good "show;" unlike those managers who care for Shakspere only so far as they can make money out of him; the student loves and reverences the poet for his works, tries to penetrate his meaning in them, and finds in the study of them his highest enjoyment and reward. When he reads Shakspere's dramas he doesn't skip; but when he wants to see them on the stage he is assured by managers and actors that the play must be cut, that no modern audience would stand a play like *Hamlet* as Shakspere wrote it. Our student cannot find that anyone has of late years tried the experiment of playing the drama closely, and giving only five-minute waits between the acts; he can hear of no manager-Disraeli who has endeavoured to educate his party-hearers to put up with Shakspere; and so he has to consider what parts of the play can best be left out. From his point of view, his opinion is unhesitating. In *Hamlet*, the Prince is the play, and nothing which illustrates his character can be spared. What, then, is the light which Fortinbras throws on *Hamlet?* Did Shakspere put him into the play that managers should cut him out; or did the poet specially design him to reveal to us Hamlet's character, both by

contrast and by Hamlet's own appreciation of that contrast? The answer is not far to seek. Twice in the play does Shakspere make Hamlet face himself, and confess what he really is: first, in Act II., scene ii., after the Player's speech "of Priam's slaughter;" second, in Act IV., scene iv., after the appearance of Fortinbras and his soldiers; and, without question, in these scenes Shakspere did deliberately for Hamlet what Hamlet did to his mother:

> . . . . . "set (him) up a glass
> Where (he might) see the inmost part of (him)."—III., iv., 19-20.

This inmost part, the reader and seer of the play, like Hamlet himself, continually overlook. They are so interested in the series of ingenious devices by which Hamlet shirks the performance of his duty; they so admire the magnificent exhibition of his nobleness in his scene with his mother, that they need to be reminded of what he is, and why he fails to do the righteous work he has vowed to execute. Shakspere uses Fortinbras for this purpose. He brings in the

> "delicate and tender prince,
> Whose spirit, with divine ambition puft,
> Makes mouths at the invisible event,
> Exposing what is mortal and unsure
> To all that fortune, death and danger dare,
> Even for an egg-shell."—IV., iv., 48-53.

He makes Hamlet confess, and us feel, what a cowardly dawdler he has been in avenging his father's murder; and his speech winds up with one of the most self-revealing touches in the whole play, self-revealing when you want from him but one *act*—

> "O! from this time forth
> My *thoughts* be bloody, or be nothing worth!"

I really cannot act yet. Let me trust to chance and see what'll turn up.

This contrast between Hamlet the Unready and Fortinbras the Ready Shakspere further emphasises by bringing the Norse hero before us at the opening of the play, I., i., 95-104, and at its close, where Hamlet says:

> "But I do prophesy the election lights
> On Fortinbras: he has my dying voice."

And the man of action, the Fifth Henry of the drama, is to take the throne that the man of thought and dawdle failed to reach. It was no new lesson for Shakspere to teach, as his readers know; and the student rightly holds that Fortinbras

is an essential part of the play of *Hamlet* on the stage as well as off it. He is accordingly grateful to the restorer of him in an actual representation of the drama. But the student is also willing to hear the other side; to listen to the pleas, that—1. To cut out any of the scenes in which Hamlet is not present would make the play an insufferably one-man piece. 2. That the First Player, having already made Hamlet confess that he is 'a dull and muddy-mettled rascal, a coward, pigeon-livered, ass'—

> "That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,
> Tempted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
> Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words,
> And fall a cursing, like a very drab,
> A scullion!"—II., ii., 559-563—

his second and weaker exposure of himself after the sight of Fortinbras may well be spared. 3. That contrast with a man of action is given by Laertes, though he descends to treachery and meanness. 4. That Fortinbras is not necessary to the stage conduct of the play; and 5. That the cost of him and his army is too great for the very few minutes of their appearance.

Of course *Hamlet* can be acted without Fortinbras, as the young folk of St. Augustine's College have lately shown that it can be acted without Ophelia; but, in my belief, the more the actor-manager studies the play, and strives to realise the intention of Shakspere in the revealment of the character of Hamlet, the more anxious will he be to keep Fortinbras, and Hamlet's self-accusing speech on him, in the play.

Mr. Frederick Hawkins reminds me that nearly thirty years ago my old acquaintance, John Oxenford, the well-known dramatic critic, wrote, "Until the veneration for Shakspere's text becomes far more intense and general than it now is, until, in fact, the public begin to remand the resuscitation of Fortinbras in *Hamlet*, Colley Cibber's *Richard III.* will remain the stock *Richard III.* of the stage." Cibber has gone; Fortinbras has come. Has he come to stay?

LETTERS TO SOME DRAMATIC CRITICS.

To E. A. Bendall, Esq.

SIR,—In writing to you I am confronted with a difficulty which I have met before in addressing others of your craft—the difficulty being this, that, as I have previously

remarked, I am nothing if not critical, and in your work there is so very little to criticise. In inditing these letters I come certainly *not* to curse, but I have put it before me as a desirable thing to point out what seem to me shortcomings in work of whatever merit. Now in your case I find myself driven to begin by pointing out a former fault which you have long left behind you, and to do this, you will observe, is really to give praise of a kind which cannot be universally bestowed. When, in a consulship which need not be particularised, you began your deservedly successful career as a dramatic critic on, if I remember rightly, the London *Figaro*, you were beset by a sin which almost invariably fastens on young writers who start with a liberal equipment of brains—the sin of regarding "smartness" as an end, not as a means to an end. What is more natural? A beginner who knows that he can say clever things, is of course, anxious to say them, though he has to drag them in by the head and shoulders; and it is very much easier to turn an epigram by the way of sarcasm or of ridicule than by that of just discrimination with a bias, if bias there must be, towards delving out merits that do not glitter on the surface. It is this last-named method that for a considerable time past you have cultivated with good acquired judgment, added to an inborn gift.

A certain other critic who is happy both in insight and in turn of expression once observed to me that your work was pre-eminent specially in soundness, and here, as often, I find myself entirely at one with him. Indeed, were I to go about to find a handle for fault-finding I should say that you are, if that may be, even excessively sound, by which I mean that I personally should be better pleased if you gave more rein to a fancy which, from occasional internal evidence, I cannot but suppose is in your possession. But, to be plain with you, I cannot honestly pretend that such an adventuring as I should like into a primrose path of pleasant conceits is any necessary part of criticism, or that your preferring to go straight to your appointed goal without lingering in any flowered byways does you any kind of disservice. This, I say, I cannot honestly pretend, and the use of the adverb reminds me of a matter wherein I must entreat your pardon for a very slight personal digression. I have been misrepresented as casting some shadow of shade of imputation on the notorious "honesty" of another member of the critical craft. It seems absurd to have to explain that nothing was further from my thought. I cannot suppose that Mr. Igreck, any more than yourself, could esteem it a compliment to be

informed that he possessed *honesty*—a qualification which is of the most elementary necessity for a dramatic critic. What I did imply was that it was both wrong and of evil example to extol as a virtue that of which the absence would be, not a vice, but a crime. Beyond this, therefore, let there be now no talk of honesty, though I may be permitted to say that to my thinking you preserve with marked success that criticial impartiality (a very different thing) which in writing of personal friends is not always the easiest thing to attain.

It is strictly no business of mine to inquire into the method of your work, but it is matter of knowledge that it has to be done very often at top speed, and it is an experience with many who ply the sometimes weary pen on various subjects that in work of this kind it is most particularly the first step, or rather the first sentence, that costs. And I imagine that in your work I detect the fact that once you have found an apt introducing sentence—once you have broken the neck of an article—the rest comes, as it were, of itself, rapidly, easily, soundly. In fact, the thoughts are ready moulded, and your only search is for the lever which you must touch to turn them out. However this may be, I sign myself as one of very many who always on a Sunday morning turn with the pleasure of anticipation to a certain part of a certain paper.

Yours, &c.,

L. Anon.

To A. B. Walkley, Esq.

SIR,—It is ever pleasant to be reminded of pleasant things, and there is a quality in your work which always recalls to me a delightful passage in a delightful skit written by Sir George Trevelyan in the days before he doubled the part of Baronet with that of Home Ruler—I mean "Horace at the University of Athens." The passage to which I refer concerns our old friend Balbus, "Who, with a frankness which I'm sure must charm ye, Declared that it was all up with the army." I do not know that you share his zeal in the building of walls, perhaps it is rather your part to see if you can pick out a brick here, and a brick there from a wall already built; but as to the engaging frankness you certainly emulate Balbus in that, if not altogether in his pessimistic view of matters. You do not declare that it is all up with the army, neither, to be sure, do you that it is all well with the army. Nor indeed do you much care what is the state of the army as it affects the world. Rather, and here comes in that delicious

candour which is so child-like and bland, you regard it only as it affects Mr. Walkley in whatever mood he may happen to be at a given time. This must be extremely interesting—to you. It must supply to you just that pleasure which a hippish invalid may get from looking back at diaries in which he has carefully noted all his symptoms, imagined or not, as they pass. This is your own account of your aims in a "prefatory note" to your collected volume of "Playhouse Impressions," and I must admit that you have reached your aims with unerring fidelity. You have indeed "fixed and recorded the fleeting sensations of the moment," and very properly you have not troubled yourself with any question as to whether they were worth the fixative. You have also taken "the less stately view of him (the critic) as a vagabond, who accepts his impressions as they come, and changes his moods with his horizons." Assuredly you are an entertaining vagabond or vagabondlet enough, and the change of your moods with your horizons is no whit more irritating than are the casual gambols of a kitten. Whether the method or un-method which you have chosen is a fit equipment for a writer who is somewhat apt to analyse Shakspere's plays more than the acting of them is what you, with your fondness for linguistic snippets, might call "une autre paire de manches." But then your freshness is a never-failing source of delight. The aged playgoer recalls his own youthful critical essays when reading yours, for I guess you, wrongly, perhaps, to be yet in possession of the inestimable privilege of youth. You certainly have it in nature if not in years, else could you not possibly have made the words "hey nonny nonny" the beginning and the end of an article on "*Much Ado About Nothing*." This, and your comparing the play to the *Hypnerotomachia* and to Veronese's great "marriage-piece" in the *Salon Carré*, furnish exact instances of that "frankness which I'm sure must charm ye" to which I have referred. You are so obviously, so naturally, and so pleasingly pleased with your own cleverness in hitting so pat upon such apt illustrations, that the veteran who reads your by no means uninstructed prattle without a responsive joy must be indeed jaded and even cynical. So, again, as to Miss Rehan's Rosalind, you thought that you were "hypnotised" by it, that the word was the most fitting to describe your emotions, and that having used it you had summed up the whole question. It is an honest method and wholesome enough, but it is "affectations, look you," though, as I have said, decidedly engaging affectations. It would be unfair, a sin I ever try to avoid, to leave unacknowledged the fact that you certainly

possess, along with this attraction of an agreeable flow of spirit and a confidence in which there is nothing repellent, no small share of the true critical faculty. Witness, to take a good instance, your remarks on Mr. Wyndham's treatment of *She Stoops to Conquer*. Nothing could be much more to the point than, to select one passage, the following sentences on how a modern actor should play in this without being too "modern": "The first and foremost rule one can lay down with confidence. He must not modernise the text. He must say exactly what Goldsmith intended him to say, and no more. . . . And interpolated pantomime may be as modern as interpolated speech. In the scene of Marlow's embarrassment, on his introduction to Miss Hardcastle, Mr. Wyndham administers several surreptitious but vigorous kicks to Hastings by way of signal. Bob Sackett might have done this, but surely not young Marlow." And, for another instance, "Do most of the things that, in modern plays, you rightly avoid. . . . Be a little insincere in your sincerity; give up taking the scene *au tragique*." You quote Lee Lewis as an illustration when, perhaps, Palmer would be even more to the point, but all that you say on this matter is really good in perception and exposition, and places you as, what you do not profess to be, a critic who has real discernment as well as a vagrom light-heartedness. In fine, you are full of promise, and your performance always gives pleasure. If one sometimes laughs at instead of with you, there can be no ill-humour or bitterness in the laughter. Your scraps of learning, ancient and modern, are seldom inept and always diverting. You have all the cleverness of a clever well-read "scholar" at either University, with a touch of his occasional harmless pedantry, and I can conceive that you might have "hailed the dawn of the French Revolution," although for aught I know you may really be the Toriest of Tories.

I am, Sir, &c.,

L. Anon.

DONIZETTI AND BERGAMO.

By Hermann Klein.

HOW many great men, I wonder, have been born in a cellar? Doubtless very few. To have been born in a garret is by no means an uncommon circumstance; but to "first see the light" in a place where the light of heaven has never penetrated,

is surely, when genius is concerned, an occurrence rare enough to bring with it a certain measure of added distinction. The distinction in question belonged, at any rate, to Gaetano Donizetti, and I am glad to say he never hesitated to own it. More than once in his letters he referred to the dark basement rooms where his parents fulfilled between them their humble vocation of *portinajo*, or *concierge*, in the ancient city of Bergamo. Nor was he ashamed—having no scintilla of false pride in his disposition—to revisit the place in after years, or to sojourn in the midst of the poor, but eminently respectable, relatives and friends with whom he had spent his earliest days. He loved his native place with the patriotic ardour of the true Bergamascan. It contained everything, or nearly everything, that was dear to him in the world; and though his work kept him elsewhere—in Vienna, in Paris, or in other important cities where they clamoured loudly for him and his operas—he had no greater wish than to spend the evening of his life and be buried within the bastion walls of the old Lombardian town at the foot of the Alps.

This explains how it came about that when Donizetti lay in Paris a helpless invalid, paralysed in body and mind, his nephew, Andrea, was so anxious to have him removed to Bergamo. The authorities were bitterly opposed to the project, and the police doctor, who was really interpreting their wishes, boldly declared that he would endeavour to defeat it by every means in his power. Their motive is rather difficult to fathom, but they certainly took extraordinary measures to prevent Donizetti from expiring anywhere but on French soil. On August 17, 1847, the patient was examined by six doctors, four of whom (including his own regular medical attendant) certified that they saw no objection to his being transported to Milan, "en prenant toutes les précautions convenables." The other two, however, "fearing that the journey might prove harmful," disagreed with the opinion of the majority, and the consequence was that the Prefect of Police continued to withhold his permission. On the evening of the 26th a party of *sergents de ville* were installed in the apartments of the *concierge* for the purpose of preventing the secret removal of the unfortunate musician, and on the following day they even refused to allow him to be taken out for a carriage drive. Such was the unhappy state of affairs when Donizetti's brother, Francesco, arrived in Paris. He set to work with the nephew, and legal assistance was invoked, with the result that by the month of October the last obstacle had been overcome, and permission obtained for the transportation of the invalid to Bergamo. There

he lingered, unconscious, alas! that he was at his beloved Italian home once more, until he died in the April of the following year.

It seems to me that these facts, which may be unfamiliar to even musical readers, are worth recalling at a moment when Bergamo is busily occupied with the celebration of the centenary of Donizetti's birth. At least they emphasise the strength of the sentiments that bound the composer to his native city, though I am bound to add that there is nothing in them to show that the tie was at all reciprocal. This is only the second time that Bergamo has paid Donizetti public honours, and on each occasion those honours have been in every sense of the word posthumous. When he died he was quietly buried in the cemetery, and it was not until his brothers came forward some years later, and offered to erect a handsome tomb to his memory, that his remains were transferred with much ceremony to the noble basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, where they now lie side by side with those of his revered master, Simone Mayr. It is a wonderful old church, an ideal resting-place for the musician whose over-active brain produced sixty operas in six-and-twenty years, and whose glorious gift of melody will continue, despite the caprices of fashion, to delight the world through many a masterpiece for centuries to come. When I stood before his tomb a few weeks ago—it was on the day before the opening of the Donizetti Exhibition—somehow it occurred to me that Bergamo had done infinitely less for its illustrious son than he had done for Bergamo. The urn which contained his ashes lent to the ancient basilica an interest greater even than its paintings and its fine Flemish tapestries and its unique inlaid wood-carvings. The building and all that was in it became to Donizetti what St Paul's Cathedral is to the remains of Sir Christopher Wren. The new monument by Jerace, which is being erected upon the open space adjoining the opera-house, constitutes a tardy recognition of a duty that ought to have been fulfilled long ago; or, rather, it furnishes a permanent visible memorial of the centenary fetes whereof its inauguration is expected to form the culminating incident.

So "all's well that ends well." If Bergamo can never "get even" with Donizetti, it has at least made a brave and successful effort to place the distinguishing characteristics of his genius in a strong and impressive light. For no thoughtful visitor to the exhibition of relics, portraits, and autographs, which will remain open for the best part of this autumn, can fail to be struck by the vastness of the labour that was accomplished by the Italian master, and the enduring beauty and fragrance of the musical ideas

that sprang from his fecund imagination. An influence so pure and ennobling as that which Donizetti wielded over the art and the artists of his time can never die whilst his works continue to live, and among these fading original scores there are some that will still afford pleasure to the ear long after the ink upon their pages has become undecipherable.

THE IMPERIAL BALLET GIRL IN RUSSIA.

By F. Vaughan Gibson.

ST. PETERSBURG—that precious stone set in a sea of mud—almost equals Paris and London in the brilliancy of its theatrical spectacles. Indeed, in one particular London cannot compare with St. Petersburg, for the Russian Opera House, a magnificent pile of stone and granite, is without a rival of its kind in Europe. The programme for each season contains the finest works of the French and Italian masters, and the management also draws frequently upon the best operatic productions of Germany and Russia. In all probability within a short space of time the gems of Russian opera will be almost unsurpassed in the world. The Tartar strain in the Russian blood accounts in a great measure for the unbounded rapture with which an audience receives and applauds a really great work rendered by artists of talent and experience. The great operatic "star" is fêted and applauded more in Russia than in France or England, and their meteor-like lives are studded with brilliant coruscations. The Russian nobles and the rich Jews vie with each other in the practical homage they pay their great operatic artists, but they like classical opera and not melodious trifles; and the prolonged and tumultuous cheering at the end of each act would greatly surprise the comparatively phlegmatic Englishman. The truth is that Russia has already written her name in letters of iron in the history of the world, and the time may not be far distant when she may be equally famous in art and music.

But there is a reverse side to this picture. One of the cruellest forms of Russian autocracy is to be found inside the Grand Opera House at St. Petersburg; and it is in the Imperial *corps-de-ballet* where it is to be seen. In England the ballet girl has absolute freedom of action. She can, of course, leave one theatre and go to another. She can love and marry without the consent of the manager, while her success upon the stage, and through life, is

ever a source of delight both to the public and her personal friends. But if ever there was a gilded slave it is the Russian ballet girl. Their discipline is more strict than in the French and Italian schools of dancing, and the fatigue they have to bear in their early training is of such a nature that only the most robust of the girls can complete the course without great physical suffering. As a rule the ballet girl in England, France, and Italy comes from a family in some way connected with the theatre, and the stage atmosphere is as natural to her as the air she breathes. In Russia it is not so, nor is their dancing splendid, though it is equal to what we see in London and Paris. Instead of being trained by a skilled master before their limbs lose the suppleness of childhood, the selection is largely dependent upon the taste of the Tsar and some of the Grand Dukes. The consequence is that the attractiveness of a young and pretty face, is often the sole reason for their being "honoured" by a command to enter the Academy at St. Petersburg. True, none are admitted over the age of fourteen years and ten months, but that is rather too old to acquire the grace and flexibility of movement at the command of a French or Italian *corps-de-ballet*. But what the Russian taiàtre daivooshka may lack in the subtlety of artistic grace is in a great measure compensated for by her exceptional beauty. The *danseuses* in the opera-houses of Moscow and St. Petersburg are undeniably the prettiest, the most interesting, and probably the most modest-looking girls to be found in any other civilised country in the world. At the same time, it is somewhat sad to look at these beautiful girls and to realise that amid all the glitter and gaiety of the theatre, where they are perfectly enchanting, girls who in domestic life might make many an honourable man happy, are really and practically the slaves of the Tsar. It is true that lately the influence of the Tsaritza has considerably altered some of the conditions under which they live, but practically their freedom and destiny is as much as ever in the hands of the director. Fancy the *corps-de-ballet* at Covent Garden being part of the private and personal property of the Prince of Wales!

The late Tsar Alexander III. very rarely went out unattended, but upon one occasion, when promenading the streets of St. Petersburg in mufti, not far from the Nevsky Prospect, a little girl recognised him, and, with childlike regardlessness of the consequences, cried out, "Heaven is high, but our Little Father is here now"—that expression being at variance with the old Russian proverb, "Heaven is high, and the Tsar is a long way

off." Alexander stopped, and immediately several of the secret police belonging to the dreaded *Troisième Section* (who invariably follow the Emperor upon the rare occasions when he takes a stroll in his capital) rushed up and seized the little girl who had had the temerity to address him. Alexander, after chatting pleasantly for a few minutes with her, passed on, but not before the address of little Nika Boudroff had been obtained. The next day a Court carriage drove up to the address, and one of the Chamberlains from the Winter Palace told her parents that by the command of the Tsar their daughter was to be trained for the Imperial *corps-de-ballet*. Her parents dared not protest, whatever their private feelings might have been; and little Nika was taken forthwith to the Academy. There she suffered dreadfully from home sickness, and was visited by her Imperial patron about three months afterwards. Nobody could doubt that the child's dearest wish was to return to her parents, but she had been carefully schooled as to what she must say. Consequently when the Tsar left her he was under the impression that his protégé was delighted at being there, and that he had conferred a great favour upon her. At the age of sixteen years and nine months she made her début at the theatre in the ballet in *Faust*, and up till six months ago never missed a performance at the opera when her services were needed. She had been taken from the very poorest class in St. Petersburg, leaving her parents and brothers and sisters the tenants of a wretched though clean dwelling, oppressed with poverty, while she rolled in luxury! But the chains did not gall the less because they were made of gold. At the age of thirty she began to suffer from a slight embonpoint, and married —by order of the Director—one of the menials employed at the Hermitage. Night after night when a member of the *corps-de-ballet*, she was seen to pass out in one of the long train of dark blue carriages belonging to the Directorate, in which they were carried from one theatre to another, according to the season, like so much merchandise. She had many offers of marriage during these years, but was not permitted to accept any of them, although in one case the officer who proposed to her through the Director was about her own age, handsome, generous, and exceedingly fond of her.

Some of the girls are picked up during the shooting expeditions of some of the Grand Dukes in the Caucasus, Tartary, and Finland. A great many are brought from Poland. Sometimes one of the Court ladies sees a poor girl who is pretty, and who shows promise of possessing a fine figure. In that case the lady

brings her under the notice of the Director, and in due course she is taken to one of the academies at St. Petersburg or Moscow. Her parents would not be consulted, but informed that by the Tsar's order their daughter would be honoured by being admitted to the Imperial Dancing Academy. All this is revolting to our ideas of liberty and justice. Of course, some of the girls like it, but the majority pine for their freedom, however poverty-stricken their homes may be. In London the ballet girl likes her profession or she would forsake it; and it is the same in every other civilised country but Russia. The English chorus girl has her home, her lover, and her liberty. In Russia she is a sylph, whose graceful movements never fail to produce enthusiastic applause, and whose heart beats high with the effect she has produced, but who would probably barter her luxurious position for the freedom of being able to give her heart to the man of her choice. But their movements and marriages are regulated entirely at the pleasure of the Director. No doubt they are raised from the lot to which they were born, and indoctrinated with ideas they would never have known; but they only feel with greater acuteness the strength of their silken bonds. True, they are selected when young on account of their beauty—their talents are fostered—and they are brought up with care and expense for the stage. A savage seeing their light, graceful figures, might think they belonged to spirit-land; but they are corporeal beings. Their training inspires love, delight, and admiration, yet they are not allowed to give way to these feelings themselves.

It is a remarkable fact that none of these girls, though plenty of them have delightful voices, have ever risen to fame either as actresses or singers. Madia May, the great Russian *prima donna*, once said that this was a great surprise to her, and in 1889, when singing in Punchielli's *La Giaconda*—a magnificent opera, too rarely heard in England—she strongly recommended that one of the girls, named Olga Meztkine, should be tried in a minor part. The result was that the girl sang splendidly and caused a sensation. In the season of 1891, Madia May, who is a most generous woman—and whose name is a household word in Russia—voluntarily resigned the *rôle* of Marguerite in *Faust*, in order that Olga Meztkine might have a fair trial in a part where she would have illimitable possibilities of showing what she could do. Again she surpassed all expectation, and her success was almost the one topic in the capital for many days. Strange to say, after that she disappeared from public view. Eventually an ugly rumour got about to the effect that she had

refused the attentions of a Grand Duke; and that she had been deported to the salt mining district of Kara, in Siberia, where she would be the principal in a singing school established by the governor, one of the cruellest and most un-musical of men. This rumour was not without strong corroboration, but whether true or false, the fact remains that, within a few days of her triumph, she was suddenly withdrawn, not only from the *rôle* she was playing, but also from the Academy. Occasionally —alas! very occasionally—they are permitted to marry men who are not always the palace minions, and most of these fortunate ones are able to see something of other European countries. There is one now at the Opéra Comique in Paris, who, after she got safely out of Russia, separated from her husband and obtained this engagement. Figna, the great Russian actor-tenor, told me, in 1894, that he had been instrumental in obtaining employment for some of the girls who were fortunate enough to leave the Tsar's *corps-de-ballet* at the age of twenty-five or thereabouts in France and Italy. Figna sustained the chief *rôle* in *La Giaconda* with Madia May in 1889, and played Faust to the Margherite of Olga Meztkine in 1891. He was much grieved at her sudden disappearance, but feared the rumours of her deportation to Kara were only too true. Only last season at La Scala, Milan, it was my pleasure to see a girl in the ballet whom he had often seen in the Tsar's *corps-de-ballet* in St. Petersburg. Through the kindness of M. Figna I was enabled to get an interview with her, and found that on the death of her husband, and through the recommendation of Madia May, she had obtained employment in the ballet at La Scala. I asked how she liked her new surroundings in Milan, and she replied—"Oh! Soodar! Kahk yah dahvolain"—Ah! Sir! how happy I am!"

A PLEA FOR MELODRAMA.

By A Young Playgoer.

A FEW years ago it was my good fortune ("my *lot*," I know, is the conventional phrase) to be present at an Adelphi first night. Seated within a small radius of me were various youths, doubtless there for the purpose of criticising or deputy-criticising the play for one or other of the new publications. Their languid air, their half-closed eyes, the chronic sneer upon their faces, its only change being to one of greater accentuation at a situation of more than common pathos, or at a sentence of real,

true manliness, all betokened them the self-styled apostles of the new criticism. These very superior young men never by any possibility allowed themselves so much as to smile at any of the lines or situations of a play peculiarly rich in low comedy passages, nor did they show any degree of interest, to say nothing of excitement, in, surely, one of the most exciting climaxes seen upon the Adelphi stage. Now, it cannot be supposed for one moment that these youths were, all of them, destitute of the sense of humour—indeed, one or two of their number have shown they possess it in a really remarkable degree—and it is equally impossible to credit them with none of the feelings of an ordinary man. The logical conclusion is that they were posing.

But it is not my main purpose to pillorise these young men; they are entitled both to their opinions and to their prejudices, and I merely draw attention to what I observed as an illustration of my next remarks. For the last twenty years or more there has been a tendency in the press, increasing of late to such proportions that it might now perhaps be described as quite general, to smile and shrug the shoulders at the mention of the word melodrama. No gibe that can be applied to this form of dramatic writing is too coarse, no epithet too contemptuous, no scantiness of treatment too unjustifiable for this Cinderella among different kinds of plays. Any stick is good enough to beat her with, any deputy among critics is sufficiently able to "go and see what it's all about." And I submit in passing that the would-be humorous method in which it has become the fashion to criticise this class of play is grossly unfair to the actors. To say that A.B. exhibited the regulation quantity of baseness, that C.D. as the innocent persecuted heroine was duly affecting, and that E.F. as the hero was noble as is his wont, is to ignore the pains that actors take—and take successfully—to differentiate similar parts in different plays. But the point I wish to make is this. Is melodrama so far away from real life as it is now the fashion to brand it? I venture to think not.

"To hold the mirror up to nature" has been proved to be impossible. Opera certainly does not; and whatever the success Shakspere may have had in so doing in his own day, it cannot be denied that the pictures of nature seen in Shaksperean mirrors seem a little warped and out of drawing in the nineteenth century. Who can believe in the reality of the motives of *Measure for Measure* or *Hamlet?* To turn to the comedies of Congreve and Sheridan, they were admitted on all sides on their first productions to be gross caricatures of the real life of their respective

days. Then the Robertsonian comedies? Ideal pictures of what life might be, not the stern reality that it really is. Intensely human they were. So are all Mr. H. A. Jones' best works, yet we fancy that Mr. Jones himself would scarcely claim for *Judah* or *The Rogue's Comedy* that, human as they are, they hold the mirror—a plane mirror—up to nature. Mr. Pinero's plays contain as a rule one or two enthrallingly natural characters, but the rest are generally very forced and unconvincing. Who ever met an Ellean in real life any more than a Florence Dombey? And Aubrey himself, is he not too full of inconsistencies to be accepted as a really natural character? One only needs to mention the name of farces in this connection to dismiss such at once.

What remains? Melodrama. Now, does melodrama hold the mirror up to nature? Are not poverty and virtue and love for ever struggling against riches and vice and hate? Is there not an incongruity in all the smaller circumstances of life that always, so to speak, forces the comic man before us, while the tears are scarcely dried from our eyes? Is not the fable of the clown and his dying child being enacted by the very men we rub shoulders with every day? Do heroic men never face danger and death for those they love? And, above all, is not virtue, more often than not, its own reward—*and a little more?* In the much scorned, much ridiculed, much vilified melodrama, there is, if one cares to look for it, the most faithful picture of everyday life to be seen on our stage. A few days back the *Daily Telegraph*, commenting upon the dearth of dramatists, instanced at random three of the most successful plays of recent years—plays that commanded crowded audiences, no matter how often played. The writer was fain to select three melodramas, *The Colleen Bawn*, *East Lynne*, and *Two Little Vagabonds*, and named as a fourth example *The Two Orphans*. Now does not the mere fact of public popularity speak something for itself? Of plays that have any serious pretensions to naturalness, it is almost a triviality to say that those which are the most natural will get the greatest measure of success. When *The Benefit of the Doubt* was withdrawn after a few weeks' run, were not several melodramas being played to crowded houses every night—an instance of the fact that plays which are nearest to nature, as I contend the last-named plays to be, will always be more successful than those which try to strike the natural chord and fail. It may take critics a long time to wake up to the fact that I have tried to demonstrate. The problem-play is dead, but still we have periodical eruptions from Mr. Jones

in the shape of a brilliant satire upon some of the weaknesses and vices of the average Briton. These, however, are not, and in spite of those who wish to accept them as such, they can never be pictures of nature. The *Daily Telegraph*, in the article before referred to, says: "Unfortunately for the best interests of the stage, and of the hearty whole-souled playgoers of our time who are natural and earnest and scorn artificiality and affectation, there has been a tendency lately to brand what is human with the ugly stamp of conventionality, and to sneer at the emotioned stop as the false note of the Philistine and vulgarian." Therein lies the kernel of the matter, and if we would resist that tendency we must protest against the silly air of contempt used in dealing with melodrama. The healthy, honest—nay, noble—lesson to be drawn from melodrama is the true reflex of life in the best of all possible worlds.

THE STAGE AND LONGEVITY.

By Austin Brereton.

AT a period when the player is held in the highest esteem, when he rejoices in a popularity which is founded on his merits, it is instructive to glance down the roll of time and note the effect which his work has had upon the life of the actor. If to live to a ripe old age be taken as an indication of years well spent, then the actor stands well to the front in this respect. For he is, as a rule, long-lived. Instances will at once occur to the student of the stage where actors and actresses have attained to great age, and, when the contrary has been the case, it will be found that the ordinary rules of health and life have not been observed; that the individual, and not his calling, have been to blame. It would occupy too much space, several pages, in fact, to go minutely into the matter; but the history of the English stage from the Restoration down to our own day possesses frequent instances of the long life of the actor. No higher tribute has been paid to an actress than that given to Mrs. Betterton by Colley Cibber. Her exact age is uncertain, but it must have been very considerable, inasmuch as she acted Ophelia to her future husband's Hamlet in 1661, and she lived until 1712, two years after the death of Betterton, who reached the age of seventy-five. "Though far advanced in years," says Cibber, "she was still so great an actress that even the famous Mrs. Barry, who acted Lady Macbeth after her, could not in that part, with all her superior strength and

melody of voice, throw out those quick and careless tones of terror which the other gave, with a facility in her manner which rendered her at once tremendous and delightful. Time could not impair her skill though it gave her person to decay. She was to the last the admiration of all true judges of nature and lovers of Shakspere, in whose plays she chiefly excelled, and without a rival. She was the faithful companion of her husband and his fellow labourer for five-and-forty years, and was a woman of unblemished and sober life." This verdict is endorsed by Samuel Pepys, who invariably speaks of her sweet voice and her "incomparable acting."

Again, among the earlier actresses, Anne Bracegirdle lived to be eighty-five. Robert Wilks was sixty-two when he died, winning this epitaph from Dr. Johnson: "A man who, whatever were his abilities or skill as an actor, deserves at least to be remembered for his virtues, which are not too often to be found in the world." Colley Cibber, player, poet, and manager, died at the age of eighty-six; John Rich was eighty, but Barton Booth was only fifty-two. Charles Macklin's hundred-and-seven years are proverbial. At the age of ninety, he created the character of Sir Pertinax Macsycophant in *The Man of the World*, and he continued acting until 1788—eight years later—when his memory began to fail him. James Quin had passed the allotted age of man by three years before he died; Ryan lived to be seventy-six. Instance upon instance of this kind might easily be multiplied, but, to take a few more of the leading lights of the stage, let us note that David Garrick was sixty-three; while his wife, who survived him for forty-three years, died in 1822, in her ninety-ninth year. Macready, born in 1793, died in 1873; Samuel Phelps was seventy-four; Charles Kean, fifty-seven. Let us take a few more whose names have left their mark upon the roll of fame, and see how the actor's work has affected his life: Mrs. Siddons was seventy-six at the time of her death; Yates, ninety-seven; Bannister, seventy-seven; Dowton, eighty-eight; Farren, eighty-five; Harley, seventy-two; Incledon, sixty-nine; Robert Keeley, seventy-five; Liston, sixty-nine; and so on. In our own day, we have more than one instance of longevity on the stage. The most noteworthy example is, of course, Mrs. Keeley, who, born in 1806, is still hale and hearty. Sir Henry Irving will be sixty next February, and who shall say that he is not as active, as energetic as ever, as full of intellectual force, as when he was in what is supposed to be the prime of life? It is, indeed, the privilege of the player to remain in

harness when others, in the walks of life removed from his own, have retired from active service. Taking nearly two hundred of the most noted actors of the past, we find that the deaths at the age of forty odd—under fifty—constitute about one-eighth of the number, while over fifty, or more than a fourth, have lived to be much over seventy years of age—conclusive facts which speak for themselves. The famous actors who have died at a comparatively early age are few and far between. The most remarkable case is that of Edmund Kean. But here, as has been said, the result is not to be attributed to the actor's calling, but to his unfortunate birth and youth. "Compare his young and blackguard life," writes Dr. Doran, in extenuation of his faults, "with the disciplined boyhood of Betterton, the early associations of Booth, the school career of Quin, the decent but modest childhood of Macklin, the gentlemanly home of the youth Garrick, the bringing up of Cooke, and the Douay college life of the Kembles. Kean was trained upon blows, and curses, and starvation, and the charity of strangers." Kean's early demise is, however, the chief exception to the invariable rule that the average actor who rises to eminence attains an advanced age.

The old theory that the atmosphere of the theatre is unhealthy will no longer hold water, for the facts prove the contrary to be the case. The actor's calling is a hard-working one. If he is to attain a high position in his profession he must perforce be ever on the alert, always occupied. He must not only rehearse his effects, but he must think them out beforehand. He must study at home before he can practise in the playhouse. And, in the theatre, as in his own life, he is obliged, even if his own nature did not prompt him to do so, to take particular care of himself. All this conduces to health, and, consequently, to long life. Again, his very duties, his nightly appearance before the public, make it imperative that he should not run to excess in eating and drinking; in short, the physical necessities of his work conduce towards good health and long life. Nay, more. If he is to attain the height of his ambition as an actor, he must exert his intellectual faculties to the utmost, especially nowadays, when the race for fame is so keen; so that he must look to it that mind and body are in order. The days of the strolling player, as they were understood a little while back, are over, and the actor of our time takes a social rank not previously accorded him. His advantages are far greater now than ever before, and it is for himself to win the guerdon. His profession is respected; his popularity is in his own hands. So, also, in great measure, is the length of his life, for he

has never before been so well cared for as now. His physical comfort has increased with his new distinction. It remains for himself to take advantage of the situation.

THE DOOM OF "MUSICAL COMEDY."

By Ernest Kuhe.

IT was inevitable. It might have been a question of years, or months, or perhaps even only of weeks. But it was bound to come at last. The critics—do they not see everything?—saw it; the public saw it, the librettists and the lyrists saw it; and, at length, has come the happy moment when the managers themselves, guided as ever by that infallible barometer—the pay-box—have realised the truth. Need I put it more plainly? Will it not be seen at a glance that I refer to the tardy, but blessed, change that has come over public opinion, and to the joyous fact that, in London at any rate, theatregoers have begun in real earnest to turn their backs on that essentially foolish and admittedly flimsy product of modern times, miscalled "musical comedy?"

Were I disposed to do so, and if any useful purpose could be served by so doing, it would be the easiest thing in the world to "diagnose" the feelings of the public in this matter. It would be simplicity itself to point out the reasons that led a presumably sane body of playgoers to accept, in the first instance, with something approaching spontaneous effusion, a style of entertainment as invertebrate, puerile, and frankly inane as that embraced under the description in question, and nothing could be less difficult than to show how and why it has come about that they have tired of the new state of things, and gone back—let us hope with renewed but chastened affection—to the old. For this, in point of truth, is exactly what has happened. Sick unto death with that bogus form of "musical comedy," which was anything but musical, and whose particular species of humour was wholly foreign to that previously associated with comedy; tired, I say, of the growing fatuities and inept vulgarities of this hybrid and degenerate class of production, "the drama's patrons" have reverted in a "compact majority"—as the disciples of Ibsen would say—to their old love, and have stepped once again with elasticity to the shrine—forsaken for an unconscionably long period—of genuine comic opera.

After all, there is nothing in the least surprising in all this.

Even is it in strict accordance with the eternal fitness of things. For did not the pioneers of the new fashion, as exemplified in the *New Barmaid* and the *Lady Slavey*—masterpieces both—step into the breach caused by the paucity of good comic operas at the psychological moment when the theatregoing public were sick and tired of productions that lacked truly "operatic" qualities, and were distinctly less "comic" than a Drury Lane drama? Briefly stated, was the case simply not this—that the gradual and inevitable degeneration of the "art form," as illustrated at its best in the merry days of Jacques Offenbach and Charles Lecocq, and the French school of opéra-bouffe writers, led to the discovery of a theatrical Klondyke in the shape of musical farce, and that the subsequent decline and fall—in merit—of pieces of the last-named kind have resulted in the regeneration and rehabilitation of comic opera? Those who make it their business to feel the pulse of the playgoing public foresaw all along that things would ultimately shape themselves in this wise, and at the present moment their vaticinations are being realised to the full. Let the present-day playgoer turn his head in what direction he will, and he must needs discern evidence of this interesting and instructive revival of public taste in favour of "the old order of things." If the Arthur Roberts class of playgoer—the playgoer, that is, who refuses to be entertained by any species of production of which that adroit and alert comedian is not the central figure—if this class of playgoer were now to direct his footsteps towards a certain theatre in Coventry-street in the hope of having his intellect stimulated and his ultra-refined sense of humour truckled to by a Gentleman Joe, a melancholy disappointment would await him. For, in the place of a "musical farce," transparently "written round" the mercurial Mr. Roberts, and calculated to convulse with merriment an audience composed, say, of the very public servants from the ranks of whom the "hero" of the piece just named was chosen; in lieu of buffoonery, horseplay, and oppressive jests, the expectant playgoer would find a real, *bona-fide*, fair, square, legitimate comic opera, as dainty, truly, as a well-dressed pretty doll, as bright, as interesting, and amusing as, for example, the aforetime popular *Olivette*, and with music (by the composer of that very work) as piquant and tuneful and refined as the most exacting lovers of melody pure and simple could well wish for.

In other directions a similar experience greets the disconsolate pleasure-seeker who finds himself groping in the dark for the ghost of musical comedy. If, for example, oblivious of the

existence of an actor of the name of John Hare, and identifying the little Garrick Theatre only with the masterful performances of one Mr. Tich, he enters that dramatic temple with the joyous recollections of *Lord Tom Noddy* still fresh upon him, he will find the boards held—not by a nondescript piece of that order, but by a very old favourite of a former generation of playgoers in the person of La Périchole. And possibly the patron of the play who roared with delight over the exquisite humour and scintillating wit of that beautiful work which was written to "exploit" Mr. Tich, would find it difficult to reconcile the amusing imbroglio and melodic charm of *La Périchole* with his notions of genuine fun and musical cleverness as formed from an acquaintance with the first-named piece. All the same I am happy to be able to believe that the great preponderance of the playgoing public will acclaim with unmixed pleasure the revival of this and other specimens of legitimate opéra bouffe, which recall to the old stager the exhilarating days of Hortense Schneider, Selina Dolaro, Emily Soldene, and last, though by no means least, of that charming actress, delightful singer, and thorough artist who has seemingly discovered the secret of perpetual youth and vitality—Florence St. John. *Apropos* of her, by the way, it is characteristic of the theatrical public that during the period when the fever of musical comedy was strong upon them they allowed her to warble her best and brightest in a fascinating opera of André Messager's to "a beggarly array of empty benches," while but a short time previously they were apparently gratified to see her in parts lamentably beneath her talent for the sake of assisting at the glorification of "musical comedy." Pleasant, indeed, is it to find the graceful and accomplished exponent of Justine Favart, of Olivette, of Nell Gwynne, of Erminie, and who shall say how many other well-remembered *rôles*, once again figuring in the gay and gracious domains of sparkling comic opera, and enacting characters worthy her artistic gifts.

And so it is we find, amid the happiest auguries, the tide slowly but surely turning in the right direction. The public are going back to their old favourites, and these, in their turn, are given the opportunity of reverting to a *genre* of lyrical personation, in which their capacity finds the best and truest expression. In the same way is it a cheering sign of the times to note how composers who are a head and shoulders above the lesser lights, by whom the market was deluged with musical farce scores, are now turning their attention to the production of a higher class of

work. Thus is it very certain that Mr. Sidney Jones, having in the musical setting of *The Geisha* shown his admirers his possession of a gift of refined and unforced melody, and proved himself, moreover, to be beyond all doubt musicianly as well as merely fluent, will never again stoop to the hackneyed platitudes that defaced the orchestral pages of *A Gaiety Girl*. And now that a fair wind is blowing in the desired direction, and public opinion is gradually veering round, it is not too much to hope that another English composer, who is happily endowed with a pretty gift, and can write with welcome grace, will hark back to his earlier manner and method. I refer to Mr. Walter Slaughter, who, as the composer of *Marjorie* and the musical illustrator of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, would probably never have coquetted with a *French Maid* had the public, in its debauched taste for pointless musical pieces, not forced him to it. In point of fact, Mr. Slaughter, in company with his ingenious collaborator, Captain Basil Hood, has, I believe, already stepped once more into the bright and alluring regions of comic opera, and if he will only promise never to offend again in the direction—say of Hansom Cabbies—I for one will forgive him his late transgressions and wish him well.

The death knell of musical comedy has been sounded by musical comedy itself. As to this, no one who has watched the gradual decline and deterioration of "up-to-date" nondescript pieces can have any doubt whatever. They began, be it remembered, with fair prospects and insidious promises, inasmuch as the musical play as represented at an early stage by the recently revived *In Town*, opened out opportunities for genial and suggestive skits on the follies and foibles of "modern society" which, had they been seized upon, might have been turned to fruitful account by writers of skill, observation, and tact. It is needless thus late in the day to deplore the inability of those who, with an eye to the main chance, took assiduously to the writing of comedies "with music" upon a purely mechanical basis to fulfil the promises held out at the outset by the introduction of the new species of theatrical entertainment. And so it came to pass that musical comedy degenerated into "music-hall" comedy, and was dependent for success wholly and solely on the personality and cleverness of the many popular and highly-salaried people engaged to endow a mere skeleton with flesh and blood and tissue. From bad, things went on to worse, until it would have been but a poor compliment even to the music-halls to characterise these flimsy and incoherent productions as "variety" entertainments. But,

fortunately, there is no longer any need for lamentations on this score. Into the coffin of musical farce, as I have said, its producers have been deliberately knocking the proverbial nails, and the only wonder is that it should have taken them so long to bury their own constitutionally-feeble infants. There are still cases, however, in which delicate and stunted children of this class are hovering between life and death, and, by dint of careful nursing and doctoring and bolstering-up, their uncertain lives may yet be prolonged for some little time.

Meanwhile the public is seen to be in that interesting stage known as the transition period. They are dangling between one form of theatrical enterprise and another. For, mark you, it has still to be seen how long comic opera will be able to hold up its head and retain a warm place in the affections of London audiences. It was supplanted, as has been seen, before, and now it behoves authors, composers, managers, and the rest to see that by keeping the reinstated favourite of a somewhat fickle public invariably attractive to ear and eye alike, the "old love" will not again fall into disrepute. It is not for me to say how this is to be done. Everybody, however, knows where the chief difficully lies. The oft-heard cry of "bad book" is as old as the oldest hills, and if composers with the power of melody and tasteful writing will only remember how fateful to the cleverest and most experienced of musicians has been their acceptance in the past of indifferent and uninteresting libretti, they will save themselves an infinity of trouble and spare the intelligent English public the humiliation of proving once again of what little consequence—in their opinion—is the score of a light operatic work so long as the dialogue is amusing, the dances are well executed, and the low-comedy merchant is always funny and sometimes vulgar. But where are these good and clever and entertaining "books" coming from? The grass has grown thick over the graves of H. B. Farnie and his loyal collaborator, Robert Reece; it was but the other day that the prolific and resourceful Frenchman upon whom, as adaptors, they drew so largely, breathed his last. We, in this country, can boast at the present moment not a few facile and ingenious versifiers and writers of graceful lyrics—Adrian Ross and George Dance and Harry Greenbank *par exemple*. But where, I ask, are the makers of serviceable and inspiring "books" suitable for light operatic treatment to be found? Echo answers "where?"

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MR. FRANK COOPER.

Portraits.

MR. FRANK COOPER.

IT may interest many of our readers to learn that two descendants of the Kemble family—one of the most illustrious families in theatrical history—are among the players of the present day. One is Mr. Henry Kemble, so long associated with Mr. Charles Wyndham at the Criterion, and the other Mr. Frank Cooper, now on tour with Sir Henry Irving, whom he has supported in several memorable productions and revivals. The youngest but one of the Kemble quartette was Stephen Kemble, born in 1758, almost immediately after a performance in which his mother had appeared as Anne Boleyn. He took to the stage in his youth, though only to find himself overshadowed by his eldest brother, the great John Philip, and at a subsequent period by his youngest brother, Charles. His best character was that of Falstaff, which, if a familiar theatrical tradition is not altogether misleading, he became corpulent enough to play without padding. Edmund Kean, who for a short time acted under his management at Drury Lane, had a higher opinion of his powers than most of his contemporaries appear to have entertained. "Stephen," the tragedian once remarked, "has a soul that *will* ooze out; John's is buckled up in his ribs." By his wife, *née* Satchell, the actor thus eulogised had several sons. The eldest, Henry Kemble, had a daughter, Agnes, who in the fulness of time married Mr. Clifford Cooper, for over half a century a well-known manager and actor, and who became the mother of the subject of the present sketch. Mr. Frank Cooper began life in an office, but soon left it to follow his father's profession. He got on so well, especially at the Brighton Theatre, that Sir Henry Irving engaged him to play Laertes in *Hamlet* at the Lyceum in 1878-9. In this character he had the privilege of taking Miss Ellen Terry on the stage there for the first time. Subsequently he went to the Royalty, the Court, the Haymarket (under the Bancrofts), and other theatres, meanwhile touring with Mrs. Langtry in America and the English provinces. In 1892 he rejoined Sir Henry Irving at the Lyceum, where he has distinguished himself as Edmund in *Lear*, Faust, Bassanio, Nemours, Mordred in *King Arthur*, and Posthumus in *Cymbeline*. If, unlike Mr. Henry Kemble, he does not bear a very close resemblance to the Kemble family, he recalls to mind what, as far as we can understand, was best in their method—their distinctness of utterance, their vigour of style, their strong grasp of character.

At the Play.

IN LONDON.

THE past month has been, as we anticipated would be the case, a particularly busy one, the new productions being exceptionally numerous. It is pleasant to record also that business at the theatres has, generally speaking, shown a marked and most welcome improvement.

HAMLET.

Revival of Shakspere's Tragedy at the Lyceum Theatre, under the management of Mr. Forbes Robertson, September 11.

Claudius	Mr. H. COOPER CLIFFE	Guildenstern	Mr. FRANK DYALL
Hamlet	Mr. FORBES ROBERTSON	Osric	Mr. MARTIN HARVEY
Horatio	Mr. HARRISON HUNTER	First Player	Mr. JAMES HEARN
Polonius	Mr. J. H. BARNES	First Gravedigger	Mr. J. WILLES
Laertes	Mr. BERNARD GOULD	Gertrude	Miss GRANVILLE
Ghost of Hamlet's Father	Mr. IAN ROBERTSON	Player Queen	Miss SIDNEY CROWE
Fortinbras	Mr. WHITWORTH JONES	Ophelia	Mrs. PATRICK CAMPBELL
Rosencrantz	Mr. GRAHAME BROWNE		

The distinctive features of Mr. Forbes Robertson's Hamlet are sweetness of disposition, dignity of manner, and complete sanity of mind, veiled occasionally by the putting on of an "antic disposition." Rarely has a Hamlet more lovable or possessed of so cheerful a disposition been seen upon the stage. Mr. Robertson has, in short, adopted the view taken and expressed by William Hazlitt on the subject, and made of the character a misanthrope amiable almost to the verge of affability. So deeply would he appear to have been imbued with this idea that one important passage, the meaning of which clearly runs counter to his preconceived impressions, is altogether discarded in the performance given at the Lyceum. Only upon such grounds can we account for the omission of the speech beginning "Now might I do it pat," a speech, by the way, that reveals in the speaker a savage desire for revenge wholly alien to the spirit in

which the new Hamlet is conceived. When we have added that the impersonation, fine as it is, just falls short of the highest point of inspiration, and that it is weakest in moments of passionate outburst, we have done with fault-finding. On the other hand, its many beautiful and noble qualities are incontestable. In appearance Mr. Robertson makes an ideal Prince of Denmark, albeit he dresses the part with marked simplicity. But the pale intellectual face, the clear-cut features, the melancholy yet gentle expression, constitute a picture of extraordinary nobility. If ever a man bore the proof of his royal birth in his bearing and demeanour it is this one. Yet Hamlet, in Mr. Robertson's hands, is, above all, human. At every turn the exquisite tenderness of his nature is revealed; his contempt he even conceals behind a veil of good-natured banter. Where other actors have shown, as in the scenes with Polonius and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, irritability of no measured description, Mr. Robertson merely displays a spirit of humorous boredom. In all things he is a Prince, eager to exhibit to those about him the courtesy and consideration due from one in his position.

It necessarily follows that the sterner aspect of Hamlet's disposition is allowed to fall somewhat into the background. To such an extent is this the case that even Hamlet's scene with his mother in the third act and that with Laertes beside the grave of Ophelia fail a little of their accustomed effect. Yet what the performance lacks in force it fully makes up for in beauty and in tenderness. Seldom, indeed, has the pathos of the character been more vividly shown; seldom have the sympathies of an audience been stirred to a greater degree by the remorseless course of events. Of new readings Mr. Robertson introduces practically none of any importance, although in the restoration of Fortinbras to the concluding scene of the play he furnishes a comparative novelty. Whether or not the step is entirely judicious is a point which will probably be widely debated, but which, owing to want of space, we cannot enter upon here. A new departure is also made by placing the scene of the fourth act in an orchard instead of the usual room in the castle. In the matter of pictorial effect a distinct gain is thus secured, although, on the other hand, a decided loss in respect of contrast is experienced. That the text was spoken by Mr. Robertson with the finest regard for effect and the truest emphasis it is hardly necessary to say. His exquisite voice, attuned to the expression alike of tenderness and of passion, was never used to greater advantage. Of Mrs. Patrick Campbell's Ophelia we regret we

cannot speak in favourable terms. The true significance of the part seems to have escaped her, and in place of arousing pity she almost invited dislike. As Polonius Mr. J. H. Barnes was admirable, although his reading of the part as that of a shrewd, middle-aged, and not easily deceived individual will not appeal to everyone. With the exception of those three the members of the Lyceum company hardly demand individual mention. One may be moved to acknowledge the conscientiousness of their endeavours without feeling called upon to praise them. The mounting of the revival, it may be added, was all that could be desired.

The White Heather.

A Drama, in Four Acts, by Cecil Raleigh and Henry Hamilton. Produced at Drury Lane, September 16.

Lady Janet Maclintock ..	Mrs. John Wood
Marion Hume	Miss Kate Rorke
Lady Molly Fanshaw ..	Miss Pattie Browne
Lady Hermione de Vaux	Miss Beatrice Lamb
The Hon. Blanche Kossiter	Miss Lillian Menelly
Donald	Miss Valli Valli
Lord Angus Cameron ..	Mr. Henry Neville
Edgar Trefusis	Mr. H. De Lange
Captain Alec Maclintock.	Mr. Dawson Milward
Dick Beach	Mr. Robert Loraine
James Hume	Mr. J. B. Gordon
Captain Dewar Gay ..	Mr. C. M. Lowne
Horace Saxonby ..	Mr. Ernest Lawford
The Duke of Shetland	Mr. J. Rosier
Jackson	Mr. Howard Russell
Dr. Blake	Mr. Akerman May
Hudson	Mr. Edward Shrimpton

Drury Lane drama is a thing by itself, and only to be judged by its own laws. One does not bring to its consideration the higher forms of criticism, or seek to gauge its value by any measure save that of popular approval. Regarded from this standpoint, *The White Heather* may be unreservedly praised. Messrs. Raleigh and Hamilton's latest play abounds in sensational scenes and stimulating episodes; it provides abundant opportunity for spectacular display, and it offers occasion for some excellent, if rather exaggerated, acting. Of anything like delicacy or subtlety it is, of course, absolutely innocent; such qualities would, in truth, be entirely out of place at Drury Lane. The authors' dialogue is more notable for smartness than wit, but in the view of many the two things are practically synonymous, and what really does it matter provided the ready laughter is forthcoming? Mr. Arthur Collins, who is now manager of the theatre over which Sir Augustus Harris ruled so long and so successfully, has done his share of the work admirably, having mounted the piece with a generosity and taste that leave nothing to be desired. As evidence let us cite the scene showing the interior of the Stock Exchange—a triumph of realism; the glimpse afforded of Battersea Park, with its busy cyclists and promenaders; the marvellous tableau representing Boulter's Lock on a fine Sunday, crowded with launches, skiffs, and canoes; the really novel and extraordinarily effective set

revealing the bottom of the sea where the struggle between Lord Angus Cameron and Dick Beach takes place for the lost record of the former's marriage with Marion Hume; and, finally, the brilliant tableau, forming an almost exact reproduction of the Duchess of Devonshire's recent fancy dress ball on the occasion of the Jubilee festivities. If all this is not sufficient to satisfy the most exacting playgoer, we are at a loss to know what will.

The story in the main follows the career of Lord Angus Cameron, who, having married in Scotch fashion a young girl, Marion Hume, considerably beneath him in position, finds it convenient at a later period to repudiate her and the child born of the union. The record of the marriage has, it appears, been lost; and Marion, repulsed by her husband, goes for protection to her father, a prosperous stock-broker. But things have gone badly with James Hume lately, and when he agrees to espouse his daughter's cause he finds that he is on the brink of ruin. Among his creditors is Lord Angus, through whose agency Hume is declared a defaulter on 'Change. The disgrace so affects the old man that he falls dead upon the floor of the House. Marion, however, speedily finds a new sympathiser in Captain Alec Maclintock, who, by his vigorous pleading, persuades his mother, Lady Janet, Lord Angus's sister, to take up Marion's cause. Lord Angus, notwithstanding, holds firm to his purpose, knowing that, once free, he can secure the hand of the beautiful and wealthy Lady Hermione de Vaux. Presently a sailor named Hudson, the only surviving witness of the marriage, enters upon the scene, and from him Lord Angus learns that the record is in the log-book of his yacht, the "White Heather," now lying at the bottom of the sea. The two rascals start off to secure the coveted document, and are followed by Maclintock and Dick Beach, the latter, a poor ne'er-do-well, who has overheard the conversation between the pair of plotters. In "the waters under the earth," Lord Angus and Dick meet, both wearing diver's costume, and in the struggle for the precious log-book the former finds his fate. The door is thus opened to the subsequent marriage of Maclintock and Marion, whose innocence is in this way firmly established.

At the head of an exceptionally long cast stands Mrs. John Wood, whose Lady Janet Maclintock was a wonderfully effective and richly humorous piece of acting, modelled on the most comic lines. Lady Janet, however, is a woman of heart as well as of brains, and round after round of applause showed how completely she had captured the sympathies of the audience. As the

heroine, Marion Hume, Miss Kate Rorke charmed everyone by her sweet and womanly, yet at times, forcible manner; while Miss Pattie Browne and Mr. H. De Lange extracted a large amount of capital out of two humorous parts. Mr. Henry Neville was, as the villain of the piece, no less successful than he has often been before as the hero; and in this latter capacity Mr. Dawson Milward played with abundant earnestness, although a trifle stiffly. The real surprises of the evening were, however, provided by two comparative new-comers, Mr. Robert Loraine and Mr. J. B. Gordon, both of whom proved themselves to be actors of commanding merit. Of the smaller parts it is sufficient to say that all were more or less effectively filled.

In the Days of the Duke.

A Drama, in a Prologue and Four Acts, by Haddon Chambers and Comyns Carr. Produced at the Adelphi Theatre, September 9.

Characters in Prologue (*Period* 1800).

Colonel Aylmer .. Mr. William Terriss	Lieut.-Col. Arthur Wellesley Mr. Charles Fulton
Laurence Aylmer .. .. ..Little Marie	Mrs. Aylmer.. .. .. Miss Marion Terry
Captain Lanson .. Mr. Charles Cartwright	Mrs. Maine .. .. .. Miss Eily Desmond
Captain Maine .. .. Mr. Henry Vibart	Dorothy Maine .. .. ..Little Dorrie
Mr. O'Hara .. .. ..Mr. D. J. Beveridge	
Sergeant Bunder .. Mr. Harry Nicholls	

Characters in Play (*Period* 1814-15).

Laurence Aylmer .. Mr. William Terriss	Dorothy Maine .. .. Miss Millward
Colonel Lanson ..Mr. Charles Cartwright	Mrs. Clinton.. .. Miss Millicent Barr
Mr. O'Hara .. .. ..Mr. J. D. Beveridge	Mrs. Bunder.. .. Miss Vane Featherston
Sergeant Bunder .. Mr. Harry Nicholls	Julie .. .. Miss Haygett
Captain Clinton .. Mr. Lawrence Cautley	Mrs. Aylmer.. .. .. Miss Marion Terry
F.M. the Duke of Wellington, K.G. Mr. Charles Fulton	

In estimating the exact amount of credit due to the various persons concerned in the production of the new Adelphi drama, one is forced to admit that the larger proportion lies with the managers, who have given to the piece an exceptionally brilliant mounting, and to the scene painter and costumier, whose efforts claim and deserve the highest praise. It would be manifestly unfair, however, to exclude the authors altogether from commendation. The story set forth by Messrs. Haddon Chambers and Comyns Carr has many stirring moments, and although it fails to satisfy all the requirements even of sound melodrama it is not without interest. In point of fact, the play fails mainly through a lack of decision on the part of the writers, who have apparently striven to break away from the traditions of the theatre and the public for which they were working, and who are yet unsuccessful in reaching the higher level it is clearly their desire to attain. The result is pretty much what might have

been expected—in attempting to sit upon two stools they have come to the ground. In the matter of stagecraft, also, they reveal a distinct want. Their story is frequently confused, and even the most attentive listener may be pardoned if he fails to follow its course clearly. Hero and heroine, moreover, are too often relegated to a subordinate position, and the interest of the intrigue, which should be concentrated on one point, becomes weakened by thus being spread over an extended surface. On the other hand, many of the scenes are in their isolated fashion exceedingly effective, while the stage pictures are marvellously brilliant and striking. Of these latter we have only space to indicate the pretty rustic set showing "The Soldiers' Rest," a quaint old hostelry, near Plymouth; the gambling-rooms in the Palais Royal, Paris, a most animated and dazzling scene; and that which immediately follows it, representing a glade in a wood beyond the Fortifications, remarkable for its still but highly impressive beauty. Brilliant also beyond all description is the representation of the ball given by the Duchess of Richmond at Brussels on the night of June 15, 1815, the memorable evening on which the Duke of Wellington learned of Napoleon's advance across the frontier. The final tableau, showing the battle-field on the morning after the victory, with the dead and dying lying about, calls, moreover, for unqualified commendation.

Only a slight summary can be given here of the plot. In the prologue it is shown how Captain Lanson, having, in conjunction with a rascally adventurer, Jim O'Hara, betrayed one of our Indian forts to the natives, contrives to fix the crime upon the gallant Colonel Aylmer, whose wife he had previously seduced, and whom, in order to silence him for ever, he eventually shoots. Fourteen years have elapsed when the curtain again rises. Aylmer's son, Laurence, has grown to manhood, and is now engaged to Dorothy Maine, a charming girl. The reappearance of O'Hara, long supposed to be dead, precipitates trouble, the old scandal respecting Colonel Aylmer being once more noised about by him and Lanson, now Colonel of a Rifle Brigade. Laurence hotly espouses his father's cause, but receiving no support from his mother, who fears that her own guilty secret may be revealed, goes to Paris to drown his sorrow in dissipation. Mrs. Aylmer then makes a powerful appeal to Lanson—quite the best acting scene in the play—but finds that his silence is only to be gained on condition that she will become his wife. This proposal she indignantly declines. Meanwhile Laurence and O'Hara have met, the result being a duel. The latter is killed, but before

dying he repents and confides to Dorothy the proofs of Colonel Aylmer's innocence. Unfortunately the paper also contains evidence of Mrs. Aylmer's guilt, a circumstance which renders it impossible that the girl should declare the truth to her lover. Eventually Lanson, fatally wounded at Waterloo, confesses everything to Laurence except the fact of the old *liaison* between him and his mother, and all ends peacefully.

Of the acting we must speak in the highest terms. The chief honours lay with Mr. Charles Cartwright (Lanson), Mr. J. D. Beveridge (O'Hara), and Miss Marion Terry (Mrs. Aylmer). Mr. William Terriss had only to look handsome and speak his lines earnestly and manfully, and this he succeeded in doing admirably. Miss Millward was even in worse case, for surely never had an Adelphi heroine fewer opportunities than she, yet her sweet womanliness and pathetic tenderness charmed everyone. The Duke of Wellington found a fitting representative in Mr. Charles Fulton, while Mr. Harry Nicholls and Miss Vane Featherston were responsible for the comedy—by no means a preponderating feature—of the piece.

One Summer's Day.

A Play, in Three Acts, by H. V. Esmond. Produced at the Comedy Theatre, September 15.

Major Dick Rudyard Mr. Charles H. Hawtrey	Maysie .. ..Miss Eva Moore
Theodore Bendyshe .. Mr. Henry Kemble	Irene .. .. ..Miss Lettice Fairfax
Phil Marsden .. .. Mr. Cosmo Stuart	Bess.. .. .. .. Miss Lydia Rachel
Robert Hoddesden .. Mr. Ernest Hendrie	Chiara .. .. Miss Constance Collier
Tom.. .. .. Mr. Kenneth Douglas	Mrs. Theodore Bendyshe
Seth.. .. .. .. Mr. Lyston Lyle	Mrs. Charles Calvert
The Urchin .. .. Master J. Bottomley	

In the limited number of promising young dramatists, Mr. H. V. Esmond holds a prominent place. No one, indeed, of his own age has awakened such hopes that he will, before many years have passed, occupy the highest position in his profession. For this Mr. Esmond has all the necessary qualifications. As an actor he has gained experience of, and thoroughly understands, stage requirements; while on the other hand he possesses naturally the invaluable gifts of imagination, wit, and acute observation. Such a combination can hardly fail of success. But Mr. Esmond has even more than this; he has the faculty of taking pains, of persevering even in the face of discouragement and the administration of faint praise, than which nothing could be more depressing. Personally, we have always held, and striven to act on the conviction, that the first duty of the critic is to stimulate rising talent, not by blind and indiscriminate praise, but by generous sympathy and quick recognition of the good points

in a work. For genius is in only too many instances a plant of delicate growth, demanding all the fostering care that can be given to it. In the circumstances, it is almost pitiable to find the many beautiful features of Mr. Esmond's latest piece passed over unnoticed in certain quarters, and only its weak points dwelt upon. The story, it is true, is not remarkable for strength, but it is set forth with such charm of manner, such delicacy of wit, and such sympathetic tenderness as to be well-nigh irresistible. One distinct defect it certainly contains, but its importance is minimised in great measure by cleverness of treatment.

Major Dick Rudyard, an easy-going, lazy man of the world, bordering on forty, passing rich on four hundred a year, and hiding beneath an impassive exterior a warm and generous heart, had at an earlier period adopted the child of a dead chum, the offspring of his union with a wild gipsy girl. The boy he represents to be his own, in order that the mother, believing him to be dead, may not be moved to claim him. Major Dick, meanwhile, loves, and is passionately worshipped by, a young girl, Maysie, but remembering his comparative poverty, his age, and the responsibility he has assumed in connection with "the kiddy," he crushes down his own hopes, and encourages his rival, a hot-headed youth named Marsden, to endeavour to win Maysie's hand. Presently Chiara, the gipsy-mother, appears upon the scene, and, having discovered the existence of her child, seeks in consequence to levy blackmail upon the Major. In this attempt she fails, however. The interview is witnessed by Maysie, who at once jumps to the conclusion that the man she loves is wedded to the gipsy. In an access of anger she consents to become Marsden's wife. But the latter's better nature eventually triumphs, and disclosing the truth to Maysie he places her in Rudyard's arms.

This slight sketch gives but the faintest impression of the wonderful charm and fascination with which the piece is permeated, or of the incidental characters that figure on the author's canvas. One of these, simply called the Urchin, a river-side waif of seven years, is conceived in a masterly spirit. The Urchin is by way of being a philosopher, and his shrewd, old-fashioned, yet not unnatural sayings, are a constant source of delight and amusement. The part was played with singular intelligence by Master J. Bottomley. As Major Dick, Mr. Charles Hawtrey showed that he is as excellent in emotional as in comic parts. A more exquisite piece of pathetic acting could not be desired. Miss Eva Moore gave a beautiful portrait of the impulsive yet gentle Maysie, while the remaining members

of the cast fully maintained the high excellence of an admirable all round representation.

Rip Van Winkle.

A Romantic Opera, in Three Acts, by William Akerman and Franco Leoni. Produced at Her Majesty's Theatre, September 4.

Rip Van Winkle .. .. .. Mr. Hedmondt.	Gretchen .. .. Miss Attalie Claire.
Nick Vedder } .. Mr. Arthur Winckworth.	Alice .. .. Miss Ada Davies.
Young Vedder }	Katrina .. .. Miss Isa McCusker.
The Burgomaster.. .. Mr. Arthur Percival.	Gnome.. .. .. Miss Nellie Reed.
Derrick von Slaus.. .. .. Mr. Homer Lind.	Spirit of the Mountains.. Miss Ross-Selwicke.
Knickerbocker .. Mr. Herbert Linwood.	

The Hedmondt season at Her Majesty's Theatre began with a new romantic opera founded upon the legend of Rip Van Winkle. It is a legend which, unlike its hero, has the gift of eternal youth. Whether it comes in the guise of domestic drama, of comic opera, or of Alhambra ballet, matters not a jot; it never loses its freshness, and it never outstays its welcome. The genius of a Joseph Jefferson or of a Fred Leslie may perhaps have as much to do with this permanence of popularity as the striking qualities of the original creation; certain it is, anyhow, that the character will continue to attract artists who fancy that they perceive in themselves the attributes essential for its embodiment. Hence the new Rip Van Winkle of Mr. E. C. Hedmondt and (we put it second, not first) the new romantic opera of Mr. William Akerman and Signor Franco Leoni. The former needs no excuse for its existence. It is an impersonation which atones by picturesque strength for whatever it may lack in the way of humour; and to the forceful personal influence of the actor and the man it adds the weighty charm of the singer. Mr. Hedmondt makes the most of his opportunities for dramatic effect, and it is in the more serious episodes of the story that he shines to the best advantage. That he does not successfully appeal to the commiseration of his audience is no fault of his. The librettist, by converting the wife from a termagant into a gentle, ill-used creature, has deprived the new Rip of his last shred of excuse for taking to drink and behaving like a scamp. His sole redeeming features in the first act are his love of children and his great respect for the partner of his sorrows—when he happens to be singing duets with her. The changes in the characterisation of the hero are presumably the result of an effort to impart to him an air of romanticism, as distinguished from his former qualities of humour and comicality. In any case they are radically wrong; and the same mistake on the part of the composer, who has treated his subject seriously and heavily to a

degree, helps to complete our regret that Mr. Hedmondt did not content himself with a revival of Planquette's simple and tuneful, but eminently pathetic and appropriate, setting of the same theme. He might also have provided himself with a better company. With the exception of Mr. Winckworth (the Vedder), Mr. Homer Lind (the Derrick), and Miss Ada Davies (the Alice), the cast of the new opera at Her Majesty's is remarkable neither for its fitness nor for its strength.

La Perichole.

A Comic Opera, in Three Acts, by Alfred Murray, from the French of Meilhac and Halevy Music by Offenbach. Produced at the Garrick Theatre, September 14.

Don Andres de Ribiera	Mr. John Le Hay	Miguel	Mr. F. J. Vigay
Don Pedro	Mr. Fred Kaye	Piquillo	Mr. Richard Clarke
Don Gomez	Mr. Wilfred Howard	Anita	Miss Emmie Owen
The Marquis de Santarem	Mr. A. G. Poulton	Mannuelita	Miss Jose Shalders
		Berginella	Miss P. Fraser
		La Périchole ..	Miss Florence St. John

The complete success of the revival of *La Périchole* at the Garrick is satisfactory in every sense. Offenbach has been neglected too long, and the time has come when the *chefs-d'œuvre* of *opéra-bouffe* may once more be taken down from the shelf to delight the old generation and the new with their perennial piquancy and their ineradicable charm. The triumph of Miss Florence St. John in *La Périchole* should be the forerunner of similar successes in the *Grande Duchesse*, in *La Belle Hélène*, or—who knows?—in *Les Contes d'Hoffman*. The wonderful freshness of the music and the story is only equalled by the marvellous youthfulness and the inimitable vocal grace of the artist, who, getting on for twenty years ago, proved herself the most delightful of Madame Favarts and the most fascinating of Olivettes. Such a brilliant return to the comic opera stage has seldom been witnessed. The *rôle* of the ballad-singer fitted Miss St. John to the life, and none of her great French rivals has acted or sung it with greater *chic* or wielded in it a more potent spell. She is admirably supported by Mr. John Le Hay as the truth-seeking, adventure-loving Viceroy of Peru—a part which brings into play the excellent vocal qualities as well as the dry individual humour of this clever comedian. The important character of Piquillo finds a less competent representative in Mr. Richard Clarke; but Mr. Fred Kaye is extremely funny as Don Pedro, and Miss Emmie Owen dances prettily as one of the three cousins who are prominent in the opening act. The revival is marked by an artistic and costly *mise en scène*, wherein are notable some real Spanish costumes of great beauty worn by the ladies of the Viceroy's court. In each of her three dresses Miss Florence St.

John presents a charming picture. The opera was stage-managed by Mr. Richard Barker, and conducted on the first night by Mr. Ivan Caryll.

"Miss Francis" of Yale.

A Farce, in Three Acts, by Michael Morton. Produced at the Globe Theatre, September 7.

Frank Staynor ..	.. Mr. Weedon Grossmith	Vesta FitzAllen ..	.. Miss Spencer Brunton
Fred Anderson ..	Mr. Harry Reeves-Smith	Edna FitzAllen ..	.. Miss May Palfrey
Byron McStuff ..	.. Mr. Arthur Playfair	Miss Mann	.. Miss Ethel Hope
James FitzAllen ..	.. Mr. C. P. Little	Mrs. Chetwynd ..	Miss Helen Ferrers
Soaper	Mr. Mark Kinghorne	Cosette	.. Miss Beatrice Ferrar

There is no need to devote much space to the consideration of "*Miss Francis*" *of Yale*. Those who take delight in pantomimic tomfoolery, in horseplay and rough-and-tumble fun, and in knockabout business will doubtless find their account in the new piece; while those who demand that even a farce shall contain a modicum of wit and of plausibility had best leave it severely alone. The plot circles round the doings of a certain Frank Staynor, a young gentleman who has gained celebrity among his fellow students as an impersonator of women. So attired he is discovered by a tiresome old spinster, Miss Mann, who, when Frank subsequently appears dressed in the garb proper to his own sex, immediately concludes that he is a female masquerading as a man for purposes of her own. To satisfy her curiosity she determines to interview the new-comer in his bedroom, and in this respect her example is followed by the other ladies resident in the house. Meanwhile Fred Anderson suffers from the suspicions cast upon his friend, who is charged with being his *chère amie*. This leads to the breaking off of the engagement between Fred and his *fiancée*, Vesta FitzAllen. Of course, in the end, a word of explanation sets everything right. The whole thing is incredibly silly and improbable. But as we have said, the farce contains one or two scenes which, in their boisterous fashion, are fairly amusing. The burden of the acting falls upon Mr. Weedon Grossmith's shoulders, who in his moments of comic terror is sufficiently droll. The remainder of the characters are, to use a vulgarism, "not in it."

The Wizard of the Nile.

Comic Opera, in Three Acts. Libretto by Harry B. Smith, music by Victor Herbert. Produced at the Shaftesbury Theatre, September 6.

Kibosh	Mr. J. J. Dallas	Simoona	Miss Amy Augarde
Ptolemy	Mr. Charles Rock	Abydos	Miss Clara Thropp
Ptarmigan	Mr. Harrison Brockbank	Cleopatra	Miss Adele Ritchie
Cheops	.. Mr. E. Dagnall		

The Wizard of the Nile starts with a droll idea and a fairly amusing first act. But the author's ingenuity carries him no great length, and the two succeeding acts fail to fulfil the

promise contained in their predecessor. The dialogue, which is not exactly a marvel of wit, teems with Americanisms appealing doubtless with greater force to playgoers beyond the Atlantic than to ourselves. Very slight, moreover, is the plot, but it possesses the advantage, rather unusual in comic opera libretti, of being tolerably coherent and intelligible. Egypt is suffering from a prolonged drought, despite the fact that Cheops, the Royal Weather Prophet, has predicted a wet season. For this mistake he is to suffer death. Presently there appears a Persian magician named Kibosh, who, being discovered in the King's barge, is also ordered to execution. By pretending that he can, by the exercise of his will, force the Nile to rise, he succeeds in escaping, and as at the very moment a thunderstorm breaks over the land, he is elevated to the position of a great Wizard, and given the hand of Ptolemy's daughter, Cleopatra. Unfortunately the Nile exceeds the limits of prudence by inundating the entire country, and thus brings Kibosh into disgrace once more. Meanwhile Cleopatra has fallen in love with her music-master, Ptarmigan, who presently finds himself consigned to prison in company with Kibosh. Help, however, is forthcoming from an unexpected quarter, and the opera concludes to the sound of marriage bells. Its best feature is unquestionably Mr. Herbert's music, which, if not strikingly original, is at any rate exceedingly tuneful, graceful, and occasionally worthy of a better use than that to which it is put. Miss Adèle Ritchie, an American actress, revealed considerable ability, both histrionic and vocal, as Cleopatra, although the constant employment of her high notes amounted almost to abuse. Mr. J. J. Dallas proved amusing as Kibosh, but the part requires a comedian of more sustained power and resource than he possesses. With the exception of Miss Amy Augarde, whose performance was admirable, the remaining characters hardly call for special notice.

The Purser.

A Nautical Farcical Comedy, in Three Acts, by John T. Day. Produced at the Strand Theatre, September 18.

Captain Causton ..	Mr. Edward Righton	Powell	Mr. J. Sebastian Smith
Reginald Temple ..	..Mr. J. G. Grahame	Edith Somers.. ..	.. Miss Adie Burt
Patrick Brady.. ..	Mr. Edmund Gurney	Mabel Viney	.. Miss Lena Benson
Fred Finchley.. ..	Mr. Stuart Champion	Mrs. Stanley	Miss Kate Phillips
Dick Masters	Mr. Charles Troode		

Mr. Day is avowedly a novice in the art of play-writing, yet his piece shows very few traces of the beginner's hand. True, it is exceedingly slight and somewhat lacking in dramatic force,

but in a farcical comedy the absence of such qualities is hardly remarkable. For the rest, the story is very neatly manœuvred, while the dialogue, although not brilliantly witty, possesses a gentle under-current of humour which is exceedingly pleasing. With all its unpretentiousness, there is, indeed, about the piece a grateful charm that deserves cordial recognition at a moment when the public seems to have given itself over to the enjoyment of meaningless tomfoolery and irritating knockabout business. For ourselves, we would rather have *The Purser*, simple and unsophisticated though it be, than a hundred farces of the conventionally boisterous pattern. The plot follows the adventures of a certain Reginald Temple, who, on the morning of his marriage, receives orders to resume his duties without delay, as the steamer to which he is appointed sails that very day. The company's regulations forbid that an officer shall be accompanied by his wife; but Reginald's bride, Edith Somers, determines to outwit the authorities by shipping as a passenger under her maiden name. Being exceedingly pretty and attractive, she naturally becomes an object of admiration to all on board, and especially to the doctor, Patrick Brady, a genial, big-hearted Irishman. Meanwhile, Temple is pursued by an old flame of his, a Mrs. Stanley, who has allowed herself to be divorced in order to marry him. As Temple's mouth is closed regarding his wife's presence on board, the position rapidly becomes embarrassing. Confusion becomes worse confounded when Temple, having discovered the captain of the steamer making love to his wife, strikes his superior, and is, in consequence, confined to his own cabin. From this he is released on the arrival of the vessel at Port Said by the receipt of a telegram explaining matters, and instructing him and his wife to return forthwith to England. Excellent acting contributed to the success of the little piece. Mr. Edward Righton gave an exquisitely humorous sketch of a captain, reared upon temperance principles, from which he is only tempted to depart, once a year, on his birthday. As the scheming Mrs. Stanley, Miss Kate Phillips was at her best, acting in the most spirited and amusing fashion. Mr. J. G. Grahame rattled through the part of Reginald Temple with evident gusto, while Mr. Edmund Gurney made one of the hits of the evening as the cheery Patrick Brady. As the heroine, Miss Adie Burt, a newcomer, created an excellent impression, and, although she has still something to learn, gave every promise of ripening into a really valuable artist. With one exception the minor parts were also effectively filled. In front

of *The Purser* was played a one-act comedy named *The Greek Soprano*, dealing with the misunderstandings of a married couple. It calls for absolutely no comment.

Francillon.

A Comedy, in Three Acts, arranged from the French of Alexandre Dumas, Fils. Produced at the Duke of York's Theatre, September 18.

Marquis de Riverolles .. Mr. John Beauchamp	Celestin .. ..Mr. Ernest Elton
Lucien, Comte de Riverolles .. Mr. Bellew	Annette de Riverolles.. ..Miss Grace Noble
Stanislas de Grandiedon .. Mr. J. L. Mackay	Baroness Smith .. .. .. Miss Helen Vane
Henri de Symieux.. .. Mr. Arthur Elwood	Eliza .. .. Miss Marie Brooke
Pinguet .. .. Mr. Charles Thursby	Francine, Comtesse de Riverolles Mrs. Potter

According to the programme, the changes effected in the English version of Dumas's *Francillon* received "the consent and approval" of the author. In the face of this statement we can only say that M. Dumas must have had very little respect for his own work if he authorised alterations which in almost every instance tend to destroy the significance of the play itself. Few authors, it is well known, have shown themselves more tenacious of their purpose than the late M. Dumas, and it seems well-nigh incredible that in the case of one of his favourite pieces, such as *Francillon* was, he should show weakness of so strange a description. However, we have the authority of the programme for the fact, and there is consequently nothing more to be said regarding the circumstance save that it is profoundly to be regretted. Although *Francillon* has never before been played in London in English, the story is so familiar through the medium of the French version that it is almost needless to refer to it here. The entire plot can indeed be told in a few lines, for the piece is rather in the nature of a discussion than of a dramatic work. Francine, wife of Lucien de Riverolles, has vowed that should she ever discover that her husband has a mistress she will immediately take to herself a lover. The moment arrives when Lucien's infidelity is made patent to her, and thereupon she proceeds to put her threat into execution. In the end her better instincts prevail, and although Lucien and her friends are temporarily led to believe in her guilt, she is forced eventually to confess to the trick she has played them. It is thus obvious that the author, while starting a thesis for debate, shrinks from drawing the moral which naturally springs from it. His work consequently remains incomplete and unconvincing. In the English version most of the delicacy and wit of the original has disappeared, and only a bald translation remains. Nor is there much to be said in favour of the per-

formance. Mrs. Brown Potter wholly misconceived the character of the heroine, while her acting was neither graceful nor pleasing. Mr. Bellew was commendably earnest and painstaking as Lucien, but the part offers few opportunities to the actor. On the other hand, Mr. Arthur Elwood gave an admirable portrait of the high-minded and gentlemanly Henri de Symieux, and Miss Grace Noble was delightful as Annette. The remaining characters, apart from Mr. Beauchamp's Marquis, scarcely call for notice.

The Tarantula.

Farce, in One Act, by Mary Aflleck Scott. Produced at the Haymarket Theatre, September 4.

Professor McBeastie.. Mr. Brandon Thomas | Maud Golightly .. ..Miss Beryl Faber.
Algy Golightly ..Mr. Clarence Blakiston |

The Tarantula is quite unworthy the theatre at which it is produced. The farce resolves itself into a frenzied hunt by two people after a spider which is supposed to have escaped, and which is eventually discovered in its box. As Professor McBeastie, Mr. Brandon Thomas is afforded opportunity for some extravagant business, but beyond that there is nothing to be said regarding the performance.

IN PARIS.

IN the slack season, the performances of the Comédie Française are the chief thing to be commented on. Corneille's *Horace* was remarkable in the excellence of its rendering, the great scene between Horatius and Curiatius especially. It was played by M. Paul Mounet and M. Albert Lambert, and was a triumph of true art not easily to be forgotten. Mlle. Adeline Dudlay, always famous in the part of Camille, was never more impassioned or more eloquent. Even those who can recall Rachel in her celebrated scene, would not have failed to admire the modern actress in the same part. The *Avare* and *Le Malade Imaginaire* were given both together in one evening, to be succeeded very soon by *Britannicus*. We cannot praise Mlle. Lerou as Agrippine; her acting is rough, her voice loud and unpleasing. MM. Albert Lambert and Paul Mounet did not shine as in *Horace*, and M. Leitner as Britannicus was too heavy. In the *Ecole des Femmes*, M. Coquelin *cadet* appeared as Arnolphe.

At the Comédie Française, too, we have seen a revival of Théodore Barrière's adaptation of Henri Mürger's novel, so

popular during the Empire, and even afterwards—*La Vie de Bohême*. The story appeared in 1852, and was the first of Mürger's works to attain lasting fame. To be placed in the *répertoire* of the Comédie Française is the highest distinction that a French play can attain; and if the adaptation is not a striking example of dramatic literature, it is, at all events, worthy of preservation as a picture of life which, although less than half a century back from our own day, is already too far away from us for any of the characters to be recognized as types of *fin de siècle* people. The play takes us into the Latin Quarter—not the Latin Quarter as it is known to-day, or even the Quarter as Trilby knew it, but earlier. The grisette is all-pervading, and is perhaps a little more respectable than Mr. du Maurier made her. Mlle. Marie Lecomte, a *débutante* at the Comédie Française, played, as Mimi, with a simplicity and tenderness which from the moment of her appearance in the second act captivated all hearts. Her death scene was very touching, and not unworthy of the great theatre where she was playing it for the first time. M. Coquelin *cadet* and M. Lambert were successful in low comedy and high comedy respectively, and much praise is due to Mlle. Nancey Martel for the quarrel scene with Mimi in the penultimate act.

At the Porte St. Martin the *Voyage en Chine*, a comic opera by MM. Labiche, Delaccur, and Bazin, was reproduced, and we saw it again with pleasure. There is no leading or striking part to comment on, but it is a gay and lively piece. *Camelot* at the République, a five-act drama by MM. Audrey, Maurey, and Tubin, is a melodrama with vividly-represented scenes of daily Parisian life. It was well received, owing greatly to the excellent acting of M. Taillade as the Camelot.

At the Cluny a great success was achieved at the first production of *Pigeon*, a four-act *comédie-bouffe* by MM. René Degas, Jean Hess, and Gustave Berny. This is the most genuinely amusing piece that Paris has seen for a long time. The dialogue is full of wit and sparkling gaiety, and the actors doubled the humour of the words by a by-play irresistibly comic. The respectable M. Bourdichon is a shoemaker in a Normandy village, and has a wife, Germaine, who, being entirely trusted by her husband, has profited by her liberty to set up a clandestine love-affair with a deputy in Rouen, one Gustave. They send their letters to each other by means of carrier-pigeons, a plan which they delight in because it is romantic and mysterious, but

which is far more dangerous than the penny post, for M. Bourdichon dislikes the pigeons, who spoil his garden, and therefore from time to time shoots and cooks them, and the risk is great that he may discover a love-letter under the wing of one of his victims. The danger thickens when Gustave, coming secretly to see Germaine, is discovered by Bourdichon, but this peril is averted by his announcing himself to be a commercial traveller in the boot trade, and he gives his name as Durémont. But now comes the real catastrophe. A police detective, accompanied by a gendarme, suddenly arrives on the scene, and denounces M. Bourdichon as carrying on a secret correspondence by means of carrier-pigeons. He produces a paper discovered upon one of the birds, covered with a cryptographic writing, apparently unintelligible. But the detective has a key, and discovers, by its aid, a meaning in the mysterious message. This he now reads aloud to the terrified company. Bourdichon is in secret and treasonable correspondence with strange countries; he is plotting against France! Consternation and denial from Bourdichon. But it is of no avail. The detective thinks the safest plan is to imprison everyone he can catch, and the guilty three are carried off, as well as various other persons who are present, including their daughter, Gabrielle, and her lover. Then follows a delightfully funny scene in the prison where all these personages are discovered. Former prisoners have solaced their captivity by making subterranean and secret passages from cell to cell, and Bourdichon and his friends make use of these, emerging from underground perpetually, with a thousand complications and amusing accidents. The piece goes on without flagging in comic situations, and the final scene is the best of all. It is laid in the room of the Juge d'Instruction, M. Glaïculs, who is the old school comrade of the unfortunate Bourdichon. The latter hopes to turn this fact to account, and addresses the Judge with familiarity, but Glaïculs is obdurate. Gustave's turn comes next. He avows to the Judge that his name of Durémont is a feigned one, that he is a colleague of Glaïculs, a deputy, and that all the mystery was about an intrigue of his own. All then is cleared up, after an amusing scene of love-making between the Judge and Mme. Bourdichon, Gustave having dressed himself up as turnkey in order to be present at the interview. Disgusted to see the flirtation of his Germaine with the Judge, he tries to hinder it, but the Judge snubs the supposed turnkey, and Gustave has to retire, The actors all played with great spirit. We mention in particular M. Hamilton, who was excellent as Gustave,

M. Véret as Bourdichon, and M. Gaillard as Glaïculs. Mlle. Dorville rendered the part of Germaine with much effect.

IN BERLIN.

The birthday of Goethe usually sees one or two revivals of Goethe plays, and this year was no exception to the rule. At the Deutsches was presented *Faust*—for the first time at this theatre—with Herr Kainz as the Doctor. For some incomprehensible reason, Herr Kainz, whom everyone would imagine to be quite an ideal Faust, absolutely failed to give even a passable rendering of the part, and it is hardly possible to speak of Herr Müller and Fräulein Steinart—the Mephistopheles and the Margaret—in anything but the same terms. At the Schiller Theater *Die Geschurster* and *Clavigo*, though excellently cast and staged, failed to make the impression that one would have imagined would be their guerdon.

At the Royal Schauspiel-Haus Theater, Michael Klapp's *Rosenkranz und Guldenstern* was revived. Many years have elapsed since it was first seen, but the comedy seems to have lost none of its freshness, and was greeted with high favour on its reappearance. It deals with the subject of a hatred on the part of an otherwise very worthy gentleman for the stage and all connected therewith, owing to an elopement by his sister to marry an actor. His son is brought up to look upon the stage with horror, but very naturally come to regard it with an honest curiosity as a *terra incognita*. He finds a cousin on the boards, and, falling in love with her, converts his father to a more charitable view. There is abundance of bye-plot, and there is a *deus ex machina* through whom all the action of the play comes about. This is Baron Rosenkranz, a middle-aged gentleman, by no means too old to love, a part exactly suited to, and faultlessly played by, Herr Kessler. Herren Molenar and Hertzer were the father and son respectively. This piece, after a short run, gave place to a revival of *Lear*, with Herr Molenar for the first time as the King, in which he scored an artistic, if not popular, success. Herr Vollmer as the Fool played with a delightful daintiness of touch, and Frau von Hochenburger as Cordelia won all hearts.

Berliner Fahrten, a musical farce in six tableau by Herren Freund and Mannstädt, has been produced at the Central Theater, and seems likely to prove by no means inferior in popular favour to its

predecessors. The plot concerns itself with the adventures of a baby, which, after getting lost, is found by a lady who has no children, and who wishes to keep it. Hence many troubles, culminating, of course, in the restoration of the precious infant. The piece is for the most part genuinely amusing, and Herren Thomas, Helmerding, and others kept the audience in an almost continuous roar of laughter from beginning to end. At the Lessing, *Umjamwewe*, a four-act comedy by E. von Wolzogen, has been received with no great amount of favour. It concerned a certain Dr. Ewart (admirably played by Herr Adolf Klein) and a German colony in Africa; but the piece was so badly constructed that the audience seemed to lose the thread of the story about half-way through the evening.

IN VIENNA.

The first novelty of the new season has added to this distinction the less happy one of being the first failure. The work which makes this double claim on public attention is *Zwei Welten*, a drama by Herr Marco Brociner, which was produced in the first week of September at the Deutsches Volkstheater. The author, who is a Roumanian by birth but has become a naturalised German, having gained some reputation as a story-writer, appears to have allowed the success achieved by a dramatisation of his novel, "Die Hochzeit von Valeni," by Herr Ganghofer, to inspire him with a desire to rank also as a playwright. Whatever his aspirations in that direction may have been, they are, doubtless, now considerably tempered down. He is even informed, in some quarters distinguished for bluntness and candour, that the necessary criticisms on his maiden dramatic effort will turn a more piercing gaze upon his literary works than they have up to the present had to endure, with the possible result of attention being directed to faults which have previously been allowed to pass unnoticed. The greater number of his stories are romances of Roumanian life, and the fact that he was a born Roumanian has always caused their acceptance as faithful representations of the characteristics and customs of his fellow-countrymen. In *Zwei Welten*, however, he has thrown down a direct challenge to Viennese criticism by making this city the scene of the drama; and it is therein that his fatal error lies. The work, indeed, in no way reflects the spirit of Viennese life and, moreover, it must be added, that it is extremely poor in respect of dramatic force and style. The chief personage of the plot is Sascha, a Russian

Nihilist, who has killed a traitorous fellow-conspirator and fled the country to escape the penalty of his crime. Settling for a time in Zurich, he makes the acquaintance of a Russian woman residing there, and combines his household with hers, until, becoming weary of the society of one who, as he puts it, can never understand him, he leaves suddenly for Vienna. There he takes up his residence in the home of a bird-trainer named Pfeiffer, and straightway becomes enamoured of Pfeiffer's daughter, an artless and pure-minded young girl, known affectionately as "Mietzi." One of the "two worlds" which give the play its title is represented by the Russian and his fellow-countrywoman, and the other by the simple, honest, and strict-living family circle of the bird-trainer. Suddenly, into the midst of this idyll of love and peace, there plunges the disturbing person of the deserted Russian woman, who tries, first by entreaty, then by tears, and finally by menaces, to persuade her former lover to return to her. Sascha remaining obdurate, she compels him to confess to Pfeiffer's daughter that his conscience is burdened with the crime of murder, and subsequently, to drive it home, she herself repeats the fact to the girl. "Mietzi's" affection for Sascha proves strong enough, however, to surmount the knowledge that such a stain exists on her prospective husband's past, and the Russian woman is thereby moved to play her last card of threatening to give information of the matter to the Russian Embassy if "Mietzi" does not at once renounce all claim to Sascha. In despair the unfortunate "Mietzi" poisons herself, and the curtain falls on the impassioned declaration of the Nihilist that he will give himself up at once to the secret police. The failure of the drama can in no way be ascribed to those who played it. Herr Christians did all that actor could do with the part of the Nihilist, and no charge of failing to make the best of adverse circumstances can lie against Fräulein Wachner or either Herr or Frau Martinelli.

The Nibelungen Cyklus at the Opera was opened with *Rheingold*. In former years it has been customary to extend the Cyklus over a period of two weeks, but this season's performance was confined to five days. From the point of view of the average theatregoer who can allow himself only one, or at the most two, visits to the Opera in a week, the longer period is naturally the more convenient, but, artistically considered, the method of presenting the chief sections of the monumental work in immediate succession has a great deal to recommend it, if it is not, in fact, the only proper one. The leading parts were sung by Herren

van Dyk, Schrötter, Reichenberg, Grengg, and Ritter, and Frauen Ehrenstein, Walker, Forster, Pohlner, Abendroth, and Kaulich.

Those who know the Burg Theater and have suffered under its defective acoustic properties will, doubtless, be glad to learn that in the process of reconstruction which the building has undergone careful attention was given to this fault. As an inaugural performance the comedy *Wilddiebe* was put upon the stage, and, although the idea may not have been in the mind of the management, it is fairly certain that, from the nature of some of its situations, no work more suitable for the testing of the sound-carrying qualities of a large building could well have been selected. It is gratifying to be able to write that the reconstructed Burg Theater came out of the ordeal with the utmost credit. The audience was large and distributed all over the building, and inquiries made among them showed a general and most satisfactory improvement.

IN ITALIAN CITIES.

As the Scala will remain closed throughout the coming winter, Sig. Sonzogno's Teatro Lirico Internazionale now stands as the chief operatic stage of Milan. It may be remarked, by the way, that the adjective "International" is scarcely a strictly accurate description of a theatre from which the music of a particular nationality—in this case German music—is specifically banned, and in which practically nothing is produced which is not either native or the product of one other country. The Lirico Internazionale would be far better described as the Teatro Lirico Italiano e Francese, for very little else than Italian and French operas ever makes an appearance in its programme. The list of productions in the winter season, which will commence on October 7th and close on March 31st, has just been issued. Among its many items are to be found some few which are new or practically so. They include *Sappho*, by M. Massenet, the libretto of which is taken from M. Daudet's famous novel of that name; *Proserpina*, by M. Saint-Saëns; *Fedora*, by Signor Giordano, with a libretto which, besides being based upon M. Sardou's romance of "Fedora," has had the advantage of his co-operation; *Arlesiana*, by Signor Cilea; and Signor Leoncavallo's *Bohème*, which made its actual first appearance in Venice a few months ago. Among the remaining operas in the list are *Il Voto* (Signori Giordano and Daspuro), *L'Assalto al Molino* (M. Bruneau), *Il Cid* (M. Massenet), *Andrea Chenier* (Sig. Giordano), *I Medici* (Sig. Leoncavallo), *L'Amico Fritz* (Sig.

Mascagni), *Carmen* (M. Bizet), *Lakmè* (Sig. Leo Delibes), *La Vivandiere* (M. Godard), *I Pescatori di Perle* (M. Bizet), *Mirella* (M. Gounod), and *Werther* (M. Massenet).

The Donizetti centenary fêtes at Bergamo commenced with the opening of an exhibition of the great maestro's manuscripts. In the presence of a gathering of representatives of the musical art from all parts of the world, Signor Checchi delivered an explanatory lecture; and subsequently the Donizetti Hymn, which was composed for the occasion by Signor Emilio Pizzi, the Director of the Conservatorio at Bergamo, was sung by an assembly of choirs. The hymn achieved an immediate success. The fetes included a series of concerts, in which Madame Melba, Madame Patti, Herr Joachim, Mr. Ben Davies, and other distinguished singers and musicians took part.

IN NEW YORK.

Nearly all the principal playhouses have now reopened, and there is every reason to believe that theatrical managers will experience all the joys of an exceptionally successful "fall." Many houses have revived, or rather continued, the runs of the plays that were being presented when, in July last, the heat made theatre-going an impossibility, among these being the Garrick, Daly's, and the Herald Square, with *Never Again* (subsequently removed to the Empire), *The Circus Girl*, and *The Girl from Paris* respectively. In *Never Again*, which is shortly to be seen at the Vaudeville Theatre, London, one had the advantage of seeing Miss Grace Kimball in the principal comedy part in which she was much more at home than Miss May Robson, its original American exponent. At Daly's *The Circus Girl* has now entered upon her fourteenth week, with Miss Nancy MacIntosh and Miss Virginia Earle in their old parts of La Favorita and Dora. *The Girl from Paris* will shortly celebrate her three hundredth performance, having begun in December last. *The Whirl of the Town* is now nearing the end of its course, the final performance being fixed for the last week of the month. At the Knickerbocker *In Town* has been produced with the most gratifying results. The Garrick has produced *The Good Mr. Best*, a musical comedy with more than the regulation amount of plot in its composition, and for that reason more amusing than most exhibitions of the same *genre*, especially as the story was really humorous and capitally interpreted. Mr. J. J. McNally, who enjoys a considerable reputation in New York, is the author. Mrs. Annie Yeamans, an old-time favourite, and Mr. J. G. Sparks were the best of an

unexceptionable cast. Mr. Frank Harvey has given the world in general and New York in particular another five-act melodrama written upon exactly the same lines as all his other works, containing just the same situations and characters and worked out by just the same means. This latest concoction is termed *A Fight for Honour*, and is hardly, perhaps, so stirring or so convincing as some of Mr. Harvey's earlier works. Except as to the gentleman cast for the villain, who seemed very uncomfortable, the players did the author more than justice. At the Star Theatre another melodrama, *The Privateer*, has been successfully produced, and at the Fourteenth Street *Shall We Forgive Her?* is enjoying a renewed lease of favour. At the Empire Mr. William Gillette and his *Secret Service* company have reappeared after their marked London success. Mr. Gillette's reception was markedly enthusiastic. The Americans are evidently very proud of the success which *Secret Service* achieved in England.

IN MADRID.

The theatres of Madrid have hardly yet settled down to serious work, and in all cases the good things are being held over until a little later in the season. A most unfortunate occurrence attended the production of *El Doú de La Africana* at the Principe Alfonso. Señorita Moreu, a promising young singer, was announced to make her first appearance on the stage on the opening night, and a large audience, who already knew her by repute as one of the leading pupils of the Conservatorio assembled to give her a flattering welcome. When, however, hurrying down from her dressing-room in response to the warning that the curtain was about to be raised, Señorita Moreu fell and broke one of her arms. This misfortune brought another in its train, for many members of the audience took the managerial announcement of the accident sceptically, and, regarding it as an effort to cover a bad case of stage-fright, made so noisy and ungallant a demonstration of feeling against Señora Perales, who was substituted for the unfortunate Señorita Moreu, that she suddenly stopped singing and burst into tears. This development was rather more than the malcontents had anticipated, and it immediately cowed them into silence, which presently gave place to round after round of applause. Things then went smoothly, and at the end of the performance Señora Perales was recalled four or five times to acknowledge the plaudits of an audience whom she had completely conquered by the touch of womanly weakness which their own unkind behaviour had called up.

Echoes from the Green Room.

Sir Henry Irving, rejuvenated by his holiday in Kent, Sussex, and Norfolk, opened a week's engagement at the Stratford Borough Theatre on September 6 with *The Bells* and *A Story of Waterloo*. On each night the house was crammed, the audience on the Wednesday, when he gave afternoon and evening performances, numbering no fewer than 6,200. The railway people must have been puzzled how to accommodate the throngs from Leytonstone, Epping, Woodford, Wanstead, and other places. In spite of increased prices, the record was continued by Sir Henry at the Camberwell Métropole, where he appeared in the same pieces during the following week. Here, responding to a call for a speech, he referred to the new *Peter the Great*, "by my boy Laurence." Sir Henry began his provincial tour at Cardiff on September 20, and is to be seen with Miss Ellen Terry at Birmingham a week later.

Miss Ellen Terry, after a rest at Winchilsea, passed her holiday in a driving tour, during which she visited Stratford-on-Avon.

Of Mr. Forbes Robertson's Hamlet we have already spoken. To follow Sir Henry Irving on his own stage in such a character argues no little courage. "It was just twenty-three years ago," the judicial critic of the *St. James's Gazette* remarks, "that he made his appearance at the Lyceum Theatre in the part of the Prince of Denmark. No event, it may be said without exaggeration, has within our time affected more powerfully the course of English dramatic art or been more fruitful of significant results. That his Hamlet was received with unqualified approval we do not pretend. But as an effort of pure intellectuality—as the revelation of the inner working of a subtle and comprehensive mind—it stands even to this day unrivalled. We question if, within the limits of his entire repertory, Sir Henry has ever originated a conception so acutely suggestive, so quick with pregnant meaning."

Mr. Willard has arrived in New York, and is to open his new American season at Wallack's Theatre on October 4 in *The Physician*. Before long, following Sir Henry Irving's example, he will visit the South.

Mr. Wilson Barrett is contemplating a visit to Australia, under the management of Mr. Williamson and Mr. Musgrove, who, it is understood, will guarantee to pay him £10,000 for a hundred performances.

THE new play which Mr. Gilbert has written for Miss Fortescue will be produced at Birmingham on September 27, too late for notice in our present issue.

MR. ARTHUR COLLINS would seem to have undertaken the management of Drury Lane under the most favourable conditions. According to the London correspondent of the *Monde Artiste*, he can draw upon a capital of £120,000. Of course, the said correspondent knows perfectly well what he is talking about.

IN addition to Mr. Allan Upward's new play, now entitled *A Cruel Heritage*, Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, who are on a successful tour in the provinces, have accepted a comedy by Mr. Ernest Hendrie and Mr. Metcalfe Wood, *The Elder Miss Blossom*, and another by Mr. Walter Frith.

THE latest collaboration is between Mr. Max Beerbohm and Mr. Murray Carson. The latter is to supply the plot, the former the story. The piece, we hear, will be of a serious and satirical kind.

NOT a few London players, including Mr. Hare, Mr. Alexander, and Mr. Tree, are on tour at the present moment. Miss Nethersole has produced at Birmingham an adaptation, entitled *The Wife of Scarli*, of Signor Giacosa's remarkable play, *Triste Amore*, and Mr. Hare, at Edinburgh, *A Bachelor's Romance*, by Miss Martha Morton, the American writer, who was married a few weeks ago in New York.

The Children of the King, a fairy piece in three acts, from the German of Herr Rosmer, with music by the composer of *Hansel and Gretel*, is shortly to be seen at the Court Theatre, the cast including Miss Cissie Loftus, Miss Isabel Bateman, Miss Hilda Spong, Mr. Martin Harvey, Mr. Herbert Ross, Mr. Fred Thorne, and Mr. Dion Boucicault. Mr. Chudleigh has secured original pieces by Mr. Pinero and Mr. Grundy.

MME. NORDICA and M. Jean de Reszke are again on friendly terms. Their reconciliation was due to the tact of Colonel Mapleson, who had taken charge of the lady's business affairs in London.

MME. BERNHARDT is still absorbed in her study of Hamlet. It is stated in a London letter to New York that she is inquiring into "the methods of Ada Cushman" in the part. Of course, the actress here referred to is Charlotte Cushman, perhaps the best Romeo of her time. Her performance of Hamlet is described on all hands as singularly fine. Her biographer, Miss Stebbins, writes:—"She alludes to it in some of her letters as the highest effort she had ever made, and the most exhausting. Of all her parts this seemed to fill out most completely the entire range of her powers. . . . Miss Cushman looked the part of Hamlet as well as she did that of Romeo. Her commanding and well-made figure appeared to advantage in the dress of the princely Dane; and her long experience in the assumption of male parts took away all sense of incongruity. In fact, her excellence in whatever she undertook to do disarmed criticism, and satisfied the mind and the eye at once."

IT would not be surprising to hear that Mme. Bernhardt had contracted another romantic marriage. According to the veracious Paris *Figaro*, she lately found herself in a most dangerous position half-way down a cliff at Belle-Isle. Her cries for help were heard by M. Harancourt, who was bathing below. A boulder to which she had clung was on the point

of giving way. He was just in time to save her, but they rolled over and over to the foot of the cliff. Mme. Bernhardt was more frightened than hurt, but her rescuer had to lie up for several days.

More patriotic than ever is Mme. Bernhardt. She lately wished to appear at Strasburg. The Statthalter refused his consent, on the ground that she had registered a vow not to appear in Germany. He was willing, however, to waive his objection if she would play beforehand in a more distinctively German city. To this condition she absolutely declined to accede.

Signora Duse, tired out by the excitement of her triumphs inParis, has been resting for some weeks by the Lac de Thun, in Switzerland, but is studying a play which she regards as likely to add an important page to the history of the Italian stage. On her return to Venice, her native place, from France, the Syndic, in the name of the municipal authorities, presented her with an address of congratulation. Curiously enough, the Parisian press criticised her dresses as being in "bad Italian taste," evidently in ignorance of the fact that they had all been made by Worth. All these dresses, by the way, were white.

Count Primoli, in an article in the *Revue de Paris*, has recorded some of Signora Duse's experiences of America. There, contrary to her wont years ago, she shrank from interviewers. "Your attitude towards them," her New York manager groaned, "will cost us $20,000. With one pleasant word you could conquer them; as it is, they will be your enemies." "I fail to see," she replied, "why I should not have my days to myself." In came Mrs. G.——,a well-known reporter. "I appeal," said the fragile actress, "to all women. Will you convey a message to them from me? Will you ask them why the working women who finish their tasks during the day are permitted to rest at night, while I, who work at night, am not allowed to rest during the day? For it is work, and ungrateful work, to receive those who call without knowing me under the pretext that a player belongs to the public, and that the public has a right to know those whom it goes to applaud or to hiss." The next day was Saturday. "Duse," says the Count, "gave a matinée. The article had been read; the appeal to American women had been heard; the protest had seemed just. Women came in crowds to the performance, and Marguerite Gautier was received with frantic acclamations. The three first nights had brought in but $700; the receipts of this matinée alone were $3000. From that time it was a triumph all along the line."

The Italian actress's conquest of Paris, as the *New York Mirror* remarks, "had a greater significance than that which attaches at the moment to an individual achievement. It means that at last this arrogant centre of dramatic art is forced to admit that art has other capitals; that its own elements are not supreme; and that there are foreign art forms and exponents that it may study with profit, as well as with pleasure. It is probable that the work of Signora Duse will finally have a greater influence on the dramatic art of Paris than upon that of any of the other great racial centres of the world in which she has appeared, because her method is more nearly antithetic to that of the more successful of French players than it is to the methods of others with which it has been contrasted, and also because it is far more true and effective than the method of her greatest

French contemporary. Nor is it inappropriate that the Italian should give lessons to the French, for in Italy the theatre had artistic forms before the French theatre, formless, began to build on the antique models that through all the generations have hindered its artistic originality."

In the same article we have an account of a conversation alleged to have been overheard by Signora Duse behind the box office one day. "What does Mme. Duse play to-night?" "La Locandiera." "How many acts?" "Three. And Cavalleria." "What costumes?" "Soubrette in the comedy; peasant in the drama." "And to-morrow?" "Camille." "How many acts?" "Five." "How many dresses?" "Five." "Does she die?" "All through one act." "All right; I shall come to-morrow."

Mme. Rejane is to reappear at the Paris Vaudeville in December, probably in a play by M. Sardou in the story of Pamela.

Miss Ethel Barrymore, so successful in *Secret Service*, has been engaged by Sir Henry Irving for his Lyceum company.

Signor Nicolini, after a trying illness, was lately removed from Craig-y-Nos to Brighton, whence it is reported that he is much better.

Colonel Mapleson and Signor Mazzini have shaken hands. The latter, it may be remembered, once challenged the former to a duel for having offered him, on behalf of Sir Augustus Harris, so trifling a sum as £150 a night for a short London engagement.

M. Jean and M. Edouard de Reszke, we understand, have accepted an engagement to sing several Wagnerian operas at St. Petersburg and elsewhere in Russia during the coming winter and spring. Mme. Eames will sing the soprano *rôles* throughout the tour.

It has been asserted that the author of "Letters to Some Dramatic Critics" accuses Mr. William Archer of dishonesty. "L. Anon"—his remarks in our present issue on the point should be noticed—did nothing of the kind. He said that Mr. Archer, being honest, had come to regard himself as "honester than the honestest."

By arrangement with Mr. Charles Frohman, *A Night Out* will be succeeded by an adaptation from the French, *Never Again*, in which several American players will take part.

Mr. Crowest, the author of *The Great Tone Poets*, has in the press a monograph of Signor Verdi, which will be issued early this month by Mr. John Milne.

"It is almost a unique thing," says Mr. Gilbert, "for an old man to do again the work of his youth." However, the "old man," as he somewhat affectedly calls himself, is about to re-issue the *Bab Ballads*, together with songs from his Savoy operas and *His Excellency*. The volume, which is illustrated anew, ought to have a wide circulation.

Mrs. Horace Sedger, sister of the late Sir Augustus Harris, died last month. Originally an actress, she opened the Novelty Theatre, Great Queen-street, a little more than nine years ago, and assisted her brother in designing the costumes for his remarkable productions at Drury Lane In many quarters she will be sorely missed.

At Burnham Beeches, in the garden of a villa long occupied by George

Grote, is a memorial erected by the historian's widow to Mendelssohn, who composed some of his greatest music there. The stone has been much defaced by ignorant urchins; but the following lines are still decipherable :—

"To mark the cherished spot which once he prest,
A humble mourner's hand hath raised a stone,
For he has sunk to his eternal rest,
Untimely parted from his young renown
Ere his rich gifts and inspiration bore
Their perfect fruit in his creative mind."

In reply to many inquiries, we may state that the forecast in the last issue of *The Theatre* as to the scope of Mr. Laurence Irving's *Peter the Great*, which is likely to appear at the Lyceum towards the end of the year, is substantially accurate.

Four new plays have just been accepted at the Comédie Française—*Tristan et Yseult*, three acts in verse, by M. Armand Silvestre; *Catherine*, five acts in prose, by M. Henri Lavedan; *Le Martyre*, five acts in verse, by M. Jean Richepin; and *Struensée*, five acts in verse, by M. Paul Meurice. The order in which they will be given has not yet been settled.

M. Claretie's method of management is at times hard to understand After an engagement of about ten months, Mlle. Antonia Laurent, formerly of the Odéon, the Gymnase, the Porte Saint Martin, and the Ambigu, has obtained leave to retire from the Comédie Française, having failed to get any part better suited to her unquestionable talents than that of a *suivante* in tragedy—Léonor in *The Cid*—and not getting the chance of appearing even in that many times.

La Vie de Bohème—the dramatic version of which was recently revived at the Français—was the book that made Henri Mürger's reputation for him, and kept him for ever out of the French Academy. "*Ce maudit livre*," he used to call it in his later days.

On the occasion of M. Faure's visit to St. Petersburg, the *artistes du ballet* in the Imperial theatres in that city sent a message of congratulation to their comrades at the Paris Opéra, who expressed themselves as "infiniment touchés de la gentille attention" thus shown them.

M. Saint-Saens not long ago declared that he would not write again for the stage. If rumour be true, he has now reconsidered his intention, as a result of some cordial speeches made at a dinner given by a number of friends in commemoration of the hundredth performance of *Samson et Dalila* at the Opéra.

Mme. Bernhardt will open her season at the Renaissance with M. Decourcelle's adaptation of *Secret Service*.

M. Massenet's *Sapho*, founded upon M. Daudet's story, is in active rehearsal at the Paris Opéra Comique, with Mme. Emma Caloé as Fanny Legrand.

M. Ginisty, director of the Odéon, proposes to produce in the coming season a series of classical representations. These chefs-d'œuvre of the great masters will be performed every Monday evening, at a price so low as to be "absolutely democratic." We wish him all success in so excellent an undertaking.

Les Maîtres Chanteurs may be looked for at the Paris Opéra before October 31, as Wagner's widow, who is not a person to be trifled with, has, in her contract, stipulated that it shall appear there by that date.

The late concours at the Conservatoire was not as brilliant as in some past years. In tragedy no first prize was awarded. M. Talrick had an *acessit*, and Mlle. Desprès a second prize. In Comedy, the only first prizes given were gained by women. Mlle. Manfroy gave a scene from the *Souris* by Pailleron; she is a charming ingénue, and will shortly appear at the Odéon. Mlle. Desprès was the other successful competitor. M. Caillard received a second prize: he played a scene from the *Fils Naturel* with great feeling. We are puzzled by the exclusion of M. Croné, whose performance of Figaro in the *Barbier de Séville* was to our minds quite remarkable, especially at his age of nineteen years.

Unless Herr Siegfried Wagner has been misreported, he believes that the success of the Bayreuth Festival has been achieved in spite of lukewarmness, if not direct opposition, amongst the Germans themselves. "The French," he is said to have said, "have always been our most zealous adherents. Now, as always, the principal supporters of Bayreuth are French, Americans, and British. Moreover, the English shame in every way the Germans, who are supine, while the German press is antagonistic. But it can continue to be so; for the more it abuses us the greater our success. You can also see now what a miserable state German music and German musicians are in. What are our national high schools of music doing for us and our cause, and what have they done? Nothing. If they ever occupied themselves with the works of my father, they did it, not out of conviction, but because they had to do it. They would have disgraced themselves if they had stuck to their craziness or spitefulness. Get along with your Germans and Germanism! If it depended on them, the existence of our *Festspiele* would long since have been endangered."

Eisenbach now has a Wagner museum, brought together by an Austrian worshipper. Among the things exhibited are the little old piano on which the composer received his early lessons from Weinlig, the original manuscript of *Rienzi*, and the warrant issued against him in 1849, while he was at Dresden, as a "politically dangerous person."

Dr. Ibsen is about to leave Christiania for Italy, where he will probably pass the whole of the coming winter.

Signor Verdi, while erecting his own tomb and composing his own requiem, objects to be reminded in any way that he is old. Not many weeks ago he was moved to wrath by an announcement that he was dying. In order to show that he remained in excellent health, he appeared at a *soirée* in Milan, and, to the great delight of his fellow-guests, sang in the love duo from *Otello* with Mme. Stolz.

Relics of Signor Verdi are eagerly sought after. One morning he abstractedly left his hat in a room of the Hotel Maggiore, at Montecatrini. A young married lady promptly concealed it, of course intending to make it one of her treasures. But the little manœuvre had been observed by another visitor, who, claiming the hat as his own, induced her to give it up to him, and went on his way rejoicing.

Signor Leoncavallo makes no secret of the distribution of parts for his

new opera, *Trilby*. Svengali will be the bass, and Trilby, of course, a modern Amina, after the plan of *La Sonnambula*, singing as a soprano. Will she sing false after Svengali's power over her wanes? The composer at present would rather not say.

Good wine needs no bush. Rossini recommended a certain songstress to Tamberlick, who brought her out. She did not please, and Tamberlick asked Rossini why he had recommended so indifferent a performer to him. "If she had been a good one," answered Rossini, "she would have had no need of recommendation."

Signor Zacconi lately appeared as Lear, but with less success than was expected. None the less does he look forward to his coming engagement in America with high hope.

Spain is still rather behind in the race of nations, especially as far as the stage is concerned. The Government has decreed that players connected with the aristocracy shall not use their titles on theatre bills.

The management of Mr. Richard Mansfield's business affairs has been undertaken by Mr. A. M. Palmer. For fifteen years or more the two have been close friends. It was under the auspices of Mr. Palmer that Mr. Mansfield achieved his earliest successes in America. By the way, he has abandoned his intention to revive *Timon of Athens*, but will probably appear before long as Henry V. and King John.

The New York *Dramatic Mirror*, the representative journal of the theatrical profession in the United States, is cool-headed enough to see through a common delusion there. "The impression that English dramatists and actors are complaining about 'the invasion of American actors and dramatists' into that land," it says, "is erroneous. On the contrary, they seem to be in a mood to profit from the invasion, as the American theatre has profited from English examples."

Mrs. John Drew, the veteran actress, died on the last day of August at Marchmont, New York. Born in London in 1818, she went on the stage at Liverpool, at the age of six, as Agib in *Timour the Tartar*. In early life she rose to an assured position in America, supporting the principal players there in tragedy, comedy, and melodrama. For thirty-one years after 1853, at first in association with her husband John Drew, a capable Irish comedian, she was the manageress of the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia. She remained in her profession down to last year, her last engagement being in the *Sporting Duchess* Company. Her Mrs. Malaprop was a singularly clever performance.

Mr. Van Biene is again in America, there to produce his new play, *The Wandering Minstrel*. Here is a little sketch of him:—"When he plays, he forces his legatos till his instrument whines and mews most distressingly. He rolls his eyes, throws back his great head of hair—in short, sensationalises to perfection. But he has some musical talent which he confessedly devotes to money-making. I am certain that if to morrow the public took interest in seeing him play the 'cello on his head he would conscientiously set to work to do so. A charlatan, then, do you say? Not quite; a speculator. And a speculator who brings to bear upon his operations all the astuteness, all the shrewd calculation of a race that for centuries has practically monopolised certain fields of money-getting.

Nordau would have taken delight in him. A mystifier of the first water, he is self-hypnotised into a belief in his own pose. I shall never forget one call upon him at the Waldorf. There were three or four of us there, and he received us, simply and sadly courteous, like an exiled monarch oppressed with the weight of a greatness which he could not hide."

ANTONIA DVORAK, formerly director of a musical school in New York, has selected *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as the subject of an opera, in which particular attention will be paid to the melodies of the negro.

A PORTRAIT in oil of Mr. J. E. Dodson as Cardinal Richelieu in *Under the Red Robe* will be shown at the autumn exhibition of the American Academy of Design.

ONE bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. "I'm offered 500 dols. a week," a singer lately said to a manager. "I'll give you 50 dols., *and you'll get it*," was the reply. And the offer was accepted.

HERE is another proof of the reverence felt by Charlotte Cushman for the players' calling. "I love," she said, "all arts equally, only putting my own just above the others, because in it I recognise the union and culmination of all. To me it seems as if when God conceived the world that was Poetry; He formed it and that was Sculpture; He coloured it, and that was Painting; He peopled it with living beings, and that was the grand, divine, eternal Drama."

MR. PAUL ARTHUR, after two years' playing in London, returned to America last month, but will soon recross to us.

THE THEATRE.

NOVEMBER, 1897.

Our Watch Tower.

LONDON THEATRICAL ART IN THE COUNTRY.

ONE by one the London "stars" return from the provinces over which they have been shining. Mr. George Alexander and the St. James's company got back to "the little village" on the 17th of October, and on the 25th presented to the metropolitan public a new play by Mr. Carton, which they had been briskly rehearsing while on tour. On November 1st Mr. Beerbohm Tree reopens Her Majesty's Theatre with *The Silver Key*, after a country progress during which he and Mrs. Tree have been seen in a selection from their repertory. The most bright and most particular "star" of all—the lord of the Lyceum—is still in the full tide of his provincial successes, with *Madame Sans-Gêne* in the front thereof, and will not resume work in London until December is well upon its way.

Altogether, the country playgoer has done well this autumn. Not only has he seen *Madame Sans-Gêne* and *The Silver Key* practically with the London casts, Mr. and Mrs. Tree's Petruchio and Katherine, and Mr. Alexander's production of *As You Like It* (with a new Rosalind in Miss Fay Davis); he has made the acquaintance of *Under the Red Robe*, with Mr. Herbert Waring and Miss Lily Hanbury, and of *A Marriage of Convenience*, with Mr. Lewis Waller and Miss Florence West. Nay, more; he has been called upon to pronounce upon plays not yet submitted to London criticism—upon *A Bachelor's Romance*, interpreted by Mr. John Hare and his company; upon *The Elder Miss Blossom*, which Mr. and Mrs. Kendal have produced; upon Mr. Gilbert's latest play, *The Fortune Hunter*, set forth by Miss Fortescue and her assistants; and upon *The Wife of Scarli*, an adaptation from the Italian, in which Miss Olga Nethersole seems to have made some mark.

These, we doubt not, are matters on which the country theatre-lover is disposed to congratulate himself. And he may well do so. We admit that he has, in the course of the year, a good deal to put up with. Allowing for six or seven weeks of pantomime and for four or five weeks of vacation in the summer, we

may say, broadly speaking, that every local manager has to secure for his patrons every year the services of something like forty travelling companies. Of these, necessarily, though unhappily, only a small percentage can be of the best. Such visits as those of the Lyceum, the St. James's, and the Her Majesty's companies, of the Kendals, of Mr. Hare, and so forth, must needs be of the nature of "events" even in the limited number of cities and towns which "stars" can afford to illuminate. During the remainder of the twelvemonth the local play-devourer must perforce partake of second and even third and fourth-rate fare. It is certain that a good deal of the dramatic and histrionic work put before the provincial theatre-goer is very poor and paltry—melodrama at its most extravagant, musical farce at its most inept, farcical comedy at its most vulgar, and comic opera at its most tawdry.

But how much better things are in the country, after all, than they used to be! With many other observers, we regret the almost total extinction of the stock companies, which we should like to see revived—to a certain extent and under certain conditions; but, assuming for the moment that stock seasons are, in the larger towns, impossible, we cannot but confess that the standard of the average touring troupe is higher than it was. There are still, of course, too many travelling companies engaged solely in exhibiting to country audiences close but colourless and lifeless replicas of London representations—too many bodies of semi-actors, semi-amateurs, playing (in Stevenson's phrase) "the sedulous ape" to their London brothers and sisters. This is an evil which dies hard, because even now there are places in the provinces where the mere phrase, "London company," has a magic and magnetic effect, drawing people to the local theatre, even though there is not a single really well-known metropolitan player in the bill. It is sufficient that the piece is a "London success;" the merit of the performance is taken upon trust. And usually the imitation of the London cast is so minute and perfect that the local playgoer actually does get a reflection, however pale, of that which his metropolitan cousin has seen and enjoyed.

It is, however, only in the less populated localities, or on the "south side," or at the "east-end" of a provincial city, that theatric entertainment of this sort is tolerated. Your west-end resident in Birmingham, in Manchester, in Liverpool, in Glasgow, in Edinburgh, in Dublin—and, one may even say, in Bristol, in Nottingham, in Sheffield, in Hull, in Newcastle, and places of that class—knows perfectly well what is the best that the stage

of to-day can yield, and sees that he gets it. And this is due simply to the fact that Sir Henry Irving and other leaders in the profession have of late years virtually carried the London stage to the very doors of the country playgoer. We are all aware, of course, that "starring" of a sort has been undertaken ever since London had a stage at all. The travelling "star" is as old as Thespis. He took with him not only his company but his scenery and his properties—such as they were. All the great tragedians and comedians have "starred," as have all leading London combinations. Old playgoers in the provinces still remember the yearly visits of the Haymarket troupe, headed by Buckstone and Compton. But not till quite recent times did a travelling manager attempt to give to the provincial theatre-lover precisely what he gave to London audiences—not only the same cast, but the same scenery, properties, and lighting, down to the smallest detail.

What is the consequence? That in all the larger towns and cities out of London there is now among play-lovers a much higher standard of judgment than ever obtained before. The test is more keen and difficult. A certain measure of good acting the provinces have always seen and enjoyed, but not till more or less recent years have they witnessed productions characterised by the completeness, richness, and finish which London now demands and receives. Nor can the good fortune they now revel in be otherwise than of benefit to the general cause of the drama. It may generate in the mind of the country enthusiast a divine discontent with anything that is not of the best, and may so tend to make the second or third best unacceptable and unmarketable. But, if that be so, we have only the more reason to rejoice. The less toleration that is shown for the poor or middling in art, the stronger and more numerous will be the efforts to produce the good. The mediocre and the inadequate will, in time, go to the wall; and is it not well that they should do so? The process, after all, can only be slow and gradual. At present the London "stars" go to only a few places, and stay only a short time. This year, we are glad to see, Sir Henry Irving has taken the Lyceum (in effect) not only to the biggest provincial centres, but also to Cardiff, Nottingham, Sheffield, Hull, and so on. Thereby he has done much to extend the influence of artistic culture in matters theatrical; and, though London must always grudge him to the provinces, still, for the sake of the spread of art all over these islands, one cannot but hope that in the future he may be able to do still more in this evangelising direction.

Portraits.

THE LATEST HAMLET AND OPHELIA.

IT does not seem long since we published in *The Theatre* portraits of Mr. Forbes Robertson and Mrs. Patrick Campbell as Romeo and Juliet. Yet two years have passed since Mr. Forbes Robertson first entered upon the cares of management, and opened at the Lyceum with Shakspere's tragedy of the Montagues and Capulets. In that production it was Mrs. Campbell who came in for the largest share of praise. Her Juliet was generally allowed to be a charming and striking performance, even if unequal; while the Romeo hardly came up to the expectations that had been formed. In *Hamlet* the positions are reversed. Mr. Forbes Robertson's portrait of the Prince of Denmark is universally admired, and, indeed, he bids fair to be the most generally-acceptable Hamlet we have seen for some years. Mrs. Patrick Campbell, on the other hand, has added nothing to her laurels by her Ophelia, which, as we have pointed out, seems somehow to miss the true significance of the character. She is not without champions, it is true, and her acting in the mad scene has impressed many good judges as more genuinely realistic than that of any other Ophelia of the time. But the popular voice, which declared with one accord that the Hamlet is in all essentials excellent, denies to Mrs. Campbell the same commendation. Mr. Forbes Robertson, indeed, has long been marked out in the minds of all who have followed his career with discriminating interest as in many respects an ideal Hamlet, and his reading of the character more than justifies their faith in his talents; since, besides being a very sound performance, it is touched with originality and provides food for discussion, showing that the mind of the student as well as the player's faculty of interpretation has been brought to bear upon the whole drama.

Naturally the success of his Hamlet stimulates the desire of London playgoers to see Mr. Robertson's Othello. Surely, he cannot mean to content himself with the provincial fame which his picture of the Moor of Venice ("picture" and "portrait" come readily to the pen in writing of one who is skilled in painting as well as in the actor's art) has already gained for him, and after that again there are many worlds waiting for him to conquer. Would he not, to take one instance, make an excellent Benedick? Before long, it is true, Sir Henry Irving will be wanting the Lyceum for himself, but there is a plenty of other playhouses that would serve the purpose.

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MR. FORBES ROBERTSON

AS "HAMLET."

The Round Table.

TENNYSON AS ACTED PLAYWRIGHT.

By Henry Elliott.

TO the lovers of the stage the most thoroughly interesting portions of the present Lord Tennyson's biography of his father will necessarily be those which relate to the poet's incursions into the theatrical domain. Though it is customary with many to depreciate the dramatic faculty of Tennyson, the fact remains that he was the author of six acted plays, three of which were performed at the Lyceum, and are associated permanently with the name and fame of the greatest actor and manager of this generation. It is generally assumed that the poet did not turn his attention to the theatre until he was sixty-five years of age. His son has no difficulty in showing that Tennyson's interest in the drama dated from his boyhood. "Even at fourteen he had written plays which were 'extraordinary for a boy,' and full of vivid contrasts and striking scenic effects." Of these plays specimens are given in the biography. On these, however, I shall not dwell. The point is, that the drama always had an attraction for the poet. "In early and middle life," says his son, "he had been a constant playgoer, and would keenly follow the action of a play, criticising the characterisation, incidents, scenic effects, situations, language, and dramatic points." Scattered throughout the memoir will be found allusions to his playgoing; and did he not write an enthusiastic sonnet on Macready? "With the great dramas of ancient and modern times he was acquainted, hating, in consequence, the hideous realism and unreality of plays like *La Tosca;* but he believed in the future of our modern English stage, when education should have made the masses more literary."

"For himself," the present peer goes on to say, "he was aware that he wanted intimate knowledge of the mechanical details necessary for the modern stage. His dramas were written with the intention that actors should edit them for the stage, keeping them at the high poetic level." And Miss Mary Anderson testi-

fies—as no doubt Sir Henry Irving would be prepared to do—to the poet's willingness to have his work adapted to theatrical requirements. "In reading *The Cup* and *The Foresters*," says Miss Anderson (in a letter quoted by the biographer), "Lord Tennyson showed by his remarks that he had the instinct of the true dramatist; and he, moreover, asked me to tell him of any lines that might seem to me to overweight the dramatic action of these plays." It so happens that the American lady never acted in any of Lord Tennyson's dramas. Lord Tennyson, as an acted dramatist, was introduced to the public by Sir Henry Irving. Most of us remember the historic night in April, 1876, on which *Queen Mary* was first enacted at the Lyceum. The play, which had been published in the previous year, was manifestly the result of much preliminary study of historical authorities—a point of honour with the poet, who was scrupulously anxious to do justice to the dead. For the close of the piece, as performed at the Lyceum, he wrote a wholly new scene, which is given in full in the memoir (II., 179). Everybody knows that Mr. Irving was King Philip and Miss Kate Bateman Queen Mary. "Miss Bateman," writes the present lord, "played some of her part finely, and Irving's Philip my father always pronounced to be a consummate performance, ranking it for powerful conception of character with Salvini's Othello." On the Australian stage, he adds, Miss Dargon won a triumph in *Queen Mary*. Of the performance at the Lyceum, Robert Browning wrote to the poet that it was a "complete success." "Irving was very good indeed, and the others did their best, nor so badly." Personally, I thought Miss Bateman's Mary distinctly hard and unsympathetic. I can at least imagine the part much more pathetically rendered.

Tennyson was next represented on the boards by *The Falcon*, the one-act play produced at the St. James's Theatre in December, 1879, with Mr. and Mrs. Kendal in the principal characters. "Mrs. Kendal," the poet remarked, "looked magnificent, and Kendal spoke his lines well." Fanny Kemble, it seems, saw the piece, and described it as "an exquisite little poem in action." Slight indeed was *The Falcon*. The poet's next substantial drama—*The Cup*, in two acts—was destined to be produced at the Lyceum. "Give me something short, and I'll do it," Irving is said (by the biographer) to have observed to Tennyson; *The Cup* was the result. Finished late in 1880, it was soon in the actor-manager's hands. "Irving," writes Mr. James Knowles to the author in December, "is in a great state of enthusiasm and excitement, and he is most anxious that you should read over the

play, not only to himself and Ellen Terry, but to all the company which is to enact it." The poet agreed, and the reading took place. Tennyson showed himself thoroughly amenable to suggestions, making a few additions to the text, and modifying the abruptness of certain "entrances." "Irving," writes the present peer, "inserted most of the stage directions, and devised the magnificent scenery." The result was "signal success," the piece being performed on more than a hundred and thirty nights.

"I hope," wrote Irving to the poet, "that the splendid success of your grand tragedy will be followed by other triumphs equally great." Such triumphs were fated to come, but not immediately. In November, 1882, as we all know, came the unhappy fiasco of *The Promise of May*. Of this piece the biographer tells us that "My father had written it, somewhat unwillingly, at the importunate entreaty of a friend who had urged him to try his hand on a modern village tragedy." Unhappily, the play was born out of due time. The public had not yet been educated up to anything of the kind. Moreover, the chief male character—Edgar—was misunderstood. As Mr. Lionel Tennyson afterwards wrote: "Edgar is not, as the critics will have it, a free-thinker, drawn into crime by his Communistic theories; Edgar is not even an honest Radical, nor a sincere follower of Schopenhauer; he is nothing thorough, and nothing sincere." It may be added that, despite the storm of adverse criticism, *The Promise of May* ran for five weeks, and helped to advance the reputation of Mrs. Bernard Beere, who represented the heroine.

After this, the name of Tennyson did not appear on a theatre bill or programme for a whole decade. In the interval he had written *The Foresters*, which, though not perhaps strictly an historical play, is a play with an historical background. "In *The Foresters*," wrote the poet, "I have sketched the state of the people in a transition period of the making of England, when the barons sided with the people, and eventually won for them the Magna Charta." It was performed, "for copyright purposes," at the Lyceum on March 25, 1892, Robin Hood and Maid Marian being undertaken by Mr. Acton Bond and Miss Violet Vanbrugh —parts played, on the same day, at New York, by Mr. John Drew and Miss Ada Rehan. Professor Jowett told the author that the Americans were "appreciative of the fancy and of the beauty, and especially of the songs and of the wise sayings about life in which the woodland play abounds." Professor Jebb wrote that the theatre was densely packed, and that the play was well acted and very cordially received.

But the greatest theatrical success of the poet-dramatist's life was yet to arrive. It came in 1893, when *Becket* was produced by Henry Irving on the same boards as those which had been trodden by the interpreters of *Queen Mary* and *The Cup*. A few scenes from the play, dealing with the Rosamond part of the story, had been performed in 1886 in Cannizaro-wood, Wimbledon, by Lady Archibald Campbell and some professional players. "We had visited Canterbury in August, 1877," says the present lord, "and gone over each separate scene of Becket's martyrdom." Bishop Lightfoot "found out about Rosamond" for the poet. The play was printed in 1879, published in 1884, and highly praised by such authorities as J. R. Green and W. G. Ward. In 1879, it would seem, Irving saw the play, but thought the time not yet ripe for its production. In 1891 he expressed himself willing to stage it, public opinion having changed for the better in the meanwhile. He himself undertook to adapt the piece to the boards, and on this point the poet's son observes—"Irving's arrangement has been criticised as too episodical; but the thread of human interest remains strong enough for its purpose, as from first to last it holds the audience in an attitude of rapt attention. Assuredly, Irving's interpretation of the many-sided, many-mooded statesman-soldier-saint was as vivid and as subtle a piece of acting as has been seen in our day. He says truly that one of the chief key-notes of the character is to be found in the following lines—

'There was a little fair-hair'd Norman maid,' etc.—

which he always gave with an indescribable tenderness." In 1893 Irving wrote to the author's son: "To me, *Becket* is a very noble play, with something of that lofty feeling and that far-reaching influence which belong to a 'passion-play.' There are in it moments of passion and pathos which are the aim and end of dramatic art." The lines at the end of the Northampton scene—"The voice of the Lord is in the voice of the people," etc., were written specially for Irving. They were among the last that Tennyson ever wrote.

THE COMPOSITION OF LONDON AUDIENCES.

By J. F. Nisbet.

I AM not aware that any systematic attempt has ever been made to discover the composition of the average audience of the west-end theatres. The first-night house we know. It varies according to the theatre; but the manager could in each

case without much difficulty tell pretty nearly the constituent elements of his public. The stalls are nearly all assigned, if not actually given away. The balcony takes the overflow of the stalls. The pit is the resort of a large body of enthusiastic first-nighters, hailing mostly from the Playgoers' Club, though here, as in the case of the stalls, each theatre has its special following. Sometimes this phrase, a "special following," must be used in a sinister sense. The claque is not a recognised institution in London as it is in Paris, but certain London managers are not disinclined to avail themselves of its aid. I could, an I would, name west-end theatres where the applause is laid on, on first nights, as systematically as the gas. The claque is not included in the salary list. But "paper" is distributed through trusted channels on the understanding that it is to be paid for in applause, and it is so paid for, often to the bewilderment of the inexperienced first-nighter, who, bored by a piece himself, is nevertheless confronted by the fact that it is vociferously applauded by a section of the public. Such a policy must pay, otherwise it would not be persisted in. Without having any particular understanding, other managers trust to their friends to make matters as pleasant as possible on first nights, and do not trust in vain. Finally, the actor, or more often the actress, occasionally indulges in a special claque independently of the manager or the author. This I have verified for myself in the case of a well-known—what shall I say, actor?—who has not been able to maintain, with the regular public, the success which he rather suddenly achieved a few years ago. I do not say that even this "support" is paid for in the vulgar sense of the word. It is friendship assiduously cultivated—that is all—and therefore stands on a higher level than transactions of a similar kind which French actresses and actors enter into quite openly. In short, by one means or another, the composition of a first-night audience is pretty well known to those most concerned.

But the audiences of the second night, the third night, and the run generally! As to these, I am afraid, no satisfactory data exist The libraries running accounts with their subscribers might be able to supply a small amount of information with regard to the reserved parts of the house. Generally speaking, however, theatrical management is a ready-money business. Three-fourths of the money in the house is taken at the doors without any questions being asked. The business is as free as that of a public-house. Yet, in view of the threatened competition of the suburban theatre, which, I believe, is destined to be felt severely in the west-end, it would be extremely important for west-end

managers to know whence their public comes. Have they a more or less local *clientèle*, or do they draw to any considerable extent upon the vast population of outer London? In the latter event, the belt of suburban theatres, once in full swing, must intercept a large proportion of the playgoing public who now flow nightly into the region round Charing-cross, known to Mr. Hall Caine as "the devil's acre." The danger is all the graver that west-end managers with their companies now book dates at the outlying theatres with the best attractions of their season. Sir Henry Irving has travelled into the wilds of Stratford and Camberwell; and both Mr. Tree and Mr. Alexander have given of their best to the patrons of the Grand, Islington. Soon the suburban resident will feel that if he only waits a little the best dramatic novelties will be brought to his door and offered to him at considerably reduced rates. Those who see in this state of things only the promise of increased business to the west-end theatres possess a degree of optimism worthy of Mr. Micawber himself.

In the "slump" which has so suddenly overtaken the west-end theatres I fancy we see the first of the effects of the suburban competition. Nothing could have been fairer than the prospects of the season when it opened six weeks ago. The average quality of the new pieces was high, and plenty of money was expended upon their production. But in a fortnight or three weeks the best of the business was exhausted; bearing out what I have long felt was to be expected—namely, that the multiplication of theatres in London would in the end bring us back to the system of short runs, cheap mounting, and, perhaps, moderate salaries. However disastrous this may be from the point of view of the existing west-end managements, I do not say that it will be disastrous to the drama. I am not sure that short runs will not be an excellent thing for both actors and dramatists, and in the end for managers, too, as soon as they shall have accommodated themselves to their altered circumstances. It is in no pessimistic spirit that I write. Only, if a change is coming, it is well, I think, to be prepared for it.

Presumably, the new suburban theatres will be conducted on the touring system. Now, as to the probable effect of this upon west-end business, we have an excellent criterion in the working of the Grand Theatre, Islington, which has secured at length a public of its own, such as each of its new suburban competitors hopes to obtain, and no doubt in due time will obtain. It would be extremely interesting to know what proportion of the Islingtonian public continues to visit the west-end theatres. The

problem is, How can this be ascertained? To confront the public as they entered a west-end theatre with the question: Pray, from what part of London do you come? would be a risky proceeding. They might resent it. Another method suggests itself. A souvenir of the play might be distributed to all members of the public on a given night on condition that they acknowledged receipt of the same by writing their names and addresses in a book. This is an experiment which might be worth making, since the proportion of Islington playgoers would afford a pretty fair indication of the effect that the new suburban theatres may, each in its own district, be expected to exercise. Inferentially, the influence of the suburbs on west-end theatrical business is enormous. At night one sees the suburban trains, omnibuses, and tramways crowded with people who have been to the play. And it is significant that the rise of the long run should have been coincident with the extension of facilities for suburban travelling. For what reason has the average London run been twice as long as that of Paris or New York, except that the west-end theatres command double the amount of population? This is a state of things which cannot, however, be expected to last; and if I am not mistaken the end of it is already in sight.

THE DEEP-SEA DRAMA.

By Clement Scott.

As we who knew him can truthfully testify, the late Augustus Harris died literally in harness. That he ever had a thousand schemes in his head is well known to all who studied the man; but the one great thing that occupied his attention when he went to Folkestone on the eve of death was the Drury Lane drama, preliminarily called *Ida, the Child of Misfortune*. When Augustus Harris desired to devote himself heart and soul to dramatic work it was necessary that he should cut himself adrift from current business and callers and interviewers, and lock himself up with his collaborators, where he could be interrupted with difficulty. Sometimes it was Paris, sometimes Venice or Switzerland; but on this occasion it was Folkestone; and there he made arrangements for a good preliminary talk with his faithful collaborators, Cecil Raleigh and Henry Hamilton, who were both with him when he was taken so seriously ill. Every Drury Lane drama designed by Augustus Harris had one scene more startling than the rest. It might be a realistic horse race, or a shipwreck, or a lift accident or what not. But the great effect in the Drury Lane

drama in contemplation when the poor fellow was taken away from us was a fight for the possession of a treasure "at the bottom of the deep blue sea." I remember well that he vaguely consulted me on the point without committing himself to any definite idea, and asked me rather pointedly whether I thought it would look very ridiculous to see one or two men assuming on the stage the ordinary diver's dress, helmet and all, then descending over the ship's side, and the scene changing to the bottom of the sea with the fishes swimming about, where there was to be a mysterious unspoken scene and a fight for a treasure between the two divers, the villain being settled by having not his windpipe but his air-tube severed. So far as I can remember, I answered diplomatically that it all depended upon how it was done; but I laughingly added, "Remember, Gus, if you show us the bottom of the sea, don't have your lobsters boiled."

"What do you mean?" was his quick answer. And then I reminded him of the celebrated scene in *Babil and Bijou*, so sumptuously produced by Dion Boucicault at Lord Londesborough's expense at Covent Garden in August, 1872, where the lobsters at the bottom of the sea were boiled scarlet, and there was a fantastic dance by a gentleman who was henceforward called "Turtle Jones." And then the conversation changed from the proposed deep-sea drama at Drury Lane, and we fell to discussing the old *Babil and Bijou* days at Covent Garden, when Miss Helen Barry made such a magnificent appearance at the head of a band of gorgeous Amazons, and Annie Sinclair was the pretty Bijou, and Mrs. Howard Paul the handsome Mistigris, and the cast contained such excellent performers as Mrs. Billington, J. B. Howe, and Lionel Brough, and the music was by Hervé and Fred Clay, and the whole town was taken with Rivière's boys' glee, "Spring, Spring, Beautiful Spring," the words written by dear old Planché, and we saw on the stage one of the very best dancers of our time, Mlle. Henriette d'Or. Before I dismiss *Babil and Bijou*, I may quote an extract from E. L. Blanchard's diary, dated August 29th, 1872:—"Opening of Covent Garden with Dion Boucicault's *Babil and Bijou*, a very brilliant affair, costing £11,000, and lasting from seven till midnight. Sat with Clement Scott, John Parry, and Mrs. Keeley in stalls. I do not think that the fairy piece will ever pay its expenses." Blanchard was right. It didn't. That was twenty-five years ago, and I with a few others, including, of course, dear old Mrs. Keeley, marching on to her century, am left to tell the tale of the extravagant disaster.

By a curious chance I have come across a letter on the subject

of *Babil and Bijou*, to which I have alluded, written to me by Charles Lamb Kenney, the brilliant wit, dramatist, and dramatic critic, who was once connected with *The Times* and the *Standard*, and who by the evidence of this letter must have been literary adviser to the Covent Garden management, as he was later to Chatterton at Drury Lane.

Acting Manager's Office,
Theatre Royal, Covent Garden
(Season 1872-1873),
December 21, 1872.

Babil and Bijou.

Dear Scott,—In answer to your letter inquiring for information regarding the changes and additions to be made in the Covent Garden piece for Christmas time, I can tell you this much (it falling within my department to furnish you with the particulars you ask for), that there will be two entirely new scenes of very striking and novel interest, one by way of grand finale, forming a very beautiful picture in the "apotheosis" line; that there will be two entirely new ballets invented by Espinosa, employing to great advantage the talent of Mlle. d'Or and surpassing his previous efforts; that there will be much additional music, solos, duets, and concerted pieces with new words by Planché and music by various eminent composers; and finally that an immense number of splendid and picturesque costumes on the same scale of lavish magnificence as heretofore will be introduced for the first time, the designs for which have been furnished by Alfred Thompson. The whole piece, in short, while remaining substantially the same, will put on an altogether new and brilliant aspect and embrace many novel features such as are suited to the audiences frequenting the theatre during holiday time. This is as much as I can say on the subject, and I have no doubt that your literary skill will set off this outline in a manner to awaken public curiosity as to our Christmas doings—at least, such is the devout hope and wish of all concerned in the prosperity of this establishment, of whom only its humblest but not least sincere well wisher is

Yours truly,
C. L. Kenney.

Clement Scott, Esq.,
44, Clifton Road East,
St. John's Wood.

But to return to the drama at the bottom of the sea. Ever since that conversation with Augustus Harris, and more forcibly since I have seen the great Drury Lane drama, *The White Heather*, which was the name of the yacht foreshadowed in *Ida, the Child of Misfortune*, I have been haunted with the conviction that I had seen or heard of something exactly like it. I seemed to see "in my mind's eye, Horatio," a picture of a sunken ship at the bottom of the sea, with mummied corpses, some struggling to get out of their cabins, others half-way up the companion, a kind of ghastly snapshot of an actual wreck. For a long time I thought I must have dreamed it, and that it was a nightmare. At last, with the aid

of my old friends Johnny Gideon and Isaac Cohen and their clever sons, who know more about Parisian and east-end drama than anyone of my acquaintance, save, of course, George Conquest, who is a walking encyclopædia, I have solved the mystery. If you will turn to the accurate columns of the faithful *Era* of January 7th, 1877, you will find there that on December 30th, 1876, there was produced at the Théâtre Historique in the Place du Châtelet, Paris, a thrilling drama of the Jules Verne school, called *Un Drame au fond de la Mer*, written by MM. Ferdinand Dugué and H. Cortambert. Here we have the exact counterpart of the diving scene and the wrecked ship which I ascribed to a nightmare. It appears that Cortambert had written a story in a penny weekly newspaper called *Le Journal des Voyages*, in which the principal situation was the fight at the bottom of the sea. Dugué utilised the situation, and accordingly Cortambert was starred on the bills as part author. Cortambert's father was a celebrated geographer, and a street near the Palace de Trocadéro, that was formerly called Rue de Sablons, has been renamed Rue Cortambert. The writer of the story is a map maker, and I think the son of the geographer. This French sensation drama was revived at the Ambigu in Paris later on, in 1884, and met with a terrific success. To show how exactly the stories correspond I will give a short extract from a very able criticism by the careful Paris correspondent of the *Era*, who, with great good nature, furnishes dramatists with plots every week.

The scene is really a curious one. The four armour-clad men wander about among groves of marine plants and banks of coral in the midst of huge crabs, octopi, and shoals of scaly-coated fish. Something similar I remember to have seen some years ago at Covent Garden, in *Babil and Bijou*, if I remember rightly. Sartene and his companions, in their search for the ends of the broken cable, soon come upon the wreck of a vessel, which turns out to have been no other than the ill-fated *Washington*, where, by a strange miracle of preservation, we find, as if they had been embalmed, the bodies of the unfortunate people who had been lost in the catastrophe represented in the first act. Here and there, on the bridge and in the cabin, lie stretched the corpses of the sailors; Emily's father, Sir Reginald, stands erect at one of the doors, which he was endeavouring to pass when death surprised him. His hands are raised aloft as if in supplication, and at his feet is his wife, her features expressing all the agony of despair. In her arms she clasps the casket which we had seen in the first act, the contents of which constitute their entire fortune. This scene is more strange and original than imposing. There is about it little or none of the mysterious horror evidently aimed at, but it is painfully realistic, the effect being more shocking than striking. It is disagreeable in the highest degree, the hideous exactitude of the figures reminding one of the Morgue. One of the four divers soon perceives the precious casket which the poor woman holds. He snatches it from her, and, on opening it, finds

it filled with priceless jewels. This is the wretch Karl, and while his eyes are feasting on the treasure he is surprised by Sartene. Karl, by a blow of his axe, severs the tube which supplies his commander with air from above, and Sartene is swept away by the current. The sailor Aristide has witnessed the crime, but he endeavours in vain to reach the assassin, whose features are hidden by his helmet. The curtain falls on this situation, which closes the drama at the bottom of the sea.

But this is not all, and it shows how true it is that "there is nothing new under the sun." Mr. Isaac Cohen tells me that thirty or forty years ago, long before this *Drame au fond de la Mer* was produced, there was a play at the old Victoria with an exactly similar scene; so most probably Cortambert based his story on an old French melodrama which would have been translated for the Victoria by J. B. Johnstone, or Travers, or possibly poor Tom Robertson, who at one time did plenty of such hack work for Lacy, the theatrical bookseller in the Strand. Then, of course, comes the provincial drama, *The Diver's Luck*, which was toured by Mr. Fred Cooke, and has been played at several of the outlying theatres, including the old Pavilion. That drama was doubtless a translation of the French play of 1876.

Yet, what does it matter? Why should a good idea be wasted? Thousands and thousands will see and enjoy Henry Neville's descent into the sea in orthodox diving costume in the admirable Drury Lane drama, *The White Heather*, and the grim, silent fight, who never saw or heard of the Paris drama, the French stories, or, *The Diver's Luck*. As I said before, "it all depends upon how it is done." The difficulty is to prevent the laugh. The Drury Lane authors, aided by Mr. Arthur Collins, have done that. Nay, more, they have created silence, the greatest art of the dramatist. A titter would have meant ruin: but silence spells success. It was the laugh that poor Harris feared.

TOUCHING THE LORD HAMLET.

By Herman Merivale.

THE greatest of all the plays ever written is with us once again—"revived," as it is the odd fashion of the day to describe the constant resurrections of Shakspere's undying drama. And the old discussions, whether he loved Ophelia or didn't, and whether he was mad or only pretended, are as lively as before. Yet Shakspere dotted his i's if ever man did. He makes Hamlet tell us for himself that he is going to pretend to be mad—that he is pretending to be mad—that he has pretended to be mad—and still it isn't enough for us. We must argue and teach him

his business. It doesn't matter much. That wonderful "problem play," which goes farther into the unseen than ever work of imagination went, should be a lesson to all the aspirants to new lessons in the vague. The subject brings with it its own uncertainties, and the fact that Hamlet lives in the most impossible whirl of circumstance that ever beset a man, always seem to us to leave him, sane as he is, without any clear idea of what he is doing, or what he is going to do next. He can scarcely show any feeling when he finds that he has killed Polonius, Ophelia's father though he be, because he can realise nothing. With a light heart he puts the names of the unlucky Rosencrantz and Guildenstern into the place of his own, and sends the poor creatures on to England to be slaughtered, while he stumbles back anyhow on to Danish soil, caught in the net of accident. Nothing seems to have gone really deep into his mind—not even his father's death—so much as his mother's second marriage, which is the text of all his discussions and the prompter of all his thought. Scholar and painter and artist, our latest Hamlet must be welcomed at once to the foremost rank of the Princes of our time. He stands amongst the best of them, with a delightful touch of gentle playfulness which is new; and one of the great charms of the character is that it is so many-sided, that, as Irving has truly said of it, every fine actor who plays it may be at his best where another shines least, and comparison for once need not be odious. There is a sense in which the part plays itself, and another in which it can never be played at all. Alas for the growth of years that make me plead guilty to Macready as my first Hamlet; of whom, in spite of Mr. Clement Scott's graceful theory that we all like our first Prince the best, I can only say that I was very young, and that he made a great noise and alarmed me dreadfully. In *King Lear*, afterwards, he terrified me yet more, and only some gracious memories of Miss Reynolds's Cordelia, and Priscilla Horton's Fool dispel the bitter thought even now. It was long before I could look with a calm mind upon Shakspere's works again, or learn to love him as I did. Evidence leaves us in no doubt of Macready's qualities, but I must always think that he was a stumbling-block to the young.

In what a wonderful fashion of his own, on the other hand, the Frenchman, Fechter, swept us off our feet, in defiance of law and order at the time laid down. He was the very prince of romantic actors, and treated the play like a romance. "'Amlet was a fine tragedy in Mr. Kean's time," said an old box-keeper at the Princess's to me, "but Mr. Fetcher has raised it to a mellerdram." That is almost as inventive as good Dr. Parker,

who tells us that *King Lear* was but a poor piece of work before Irving was knighted. But the old fellow knew what he meant. In Fechter's hands, somehow, even the philosophy seemed subservient to the action, and the stirring story never stood still for a minute. He was the best of all the impulsive Hamlets, as Forbes Robertson ranks high among the intellectual ones, in the same category as Irving. If I were to play the Prince I think I should try to form a theory of my own about him, and cut out all the passages which didn't agree with it. Likewise I should like to bring in one "new reading" which I have always longed to hear. Rather, I should say, a new emphasis, for it is nothing more. Throughout the play, nothing is so much insisted on as the ocular evidence of all who met the ghost. Would not the words have risen naturally to Hamlet's lips like this—

The sepulchre
Wherein we *saw* thee quietly inurned!

But *Hamlet* is a dangerous subject to run on about, especially for one who would rather see it to this hour than any other play. Recently, at the Olympic, I had the pleasure of listening to a very capable Hamlet in Nutcombe Gould, who brought many of the better methods of the older school to bear, though I do not know where he can have learned them. He reminded me quite curiously, at times, of some of the readings and fashions of Charles Kean. There lies the unique beauty of the insuperable poem. There are so many ways of rendering it which all may seem right and consistent when well done, that one criticism drives out another like the proverbial nail. And when I hear all the moans and lamentations over the public's indifference to good plays, I can but wonder why they should remain so sturdily faithful to their Hamlets and Rosalinds. Both the gentleman and the lady talk as much as the most word-loving of latter-day dramatists could desire, yet they don't spoil the movement of the play. Oh gentlemen! do move—move, like everything else in a restless age, or we shall lose the art of drama. Remember that the very word, drama, in the Greek, means something to be done, not said. And Shakspere plunges *in medias res*, and has his ghost on the stage, and his Capulets and Montagues biting their thumbs, before the curtain has been up two minutes. Let not the day arrive when the talking drama is to be substituted for the acting drama, for the fashion could not last, and the public will be abused for declining to go. Whatever the merits of the Ibsen controversy, it is a certainty that as a rule his stories keep moving

as becomes a playwright; though his characters and their atmosphere are too unfamiliar to us ever to become naturalised.

I might run on a good deal more, and dwell on the minor ways in which the new Lyceum *Hamlet* charmed me—notably by giving me, to my mind, the best Polonius and Claudius I have seen since the Fechter days. For the Frenchman could inspire his companions, especially when of such doughty worth as "Sam Emery," who was a very Norse Viking of a King, immensely vigorous and true, and John Brougham, the Irish author and comedian, who decelticised himself into a fine Polonius. No one has hit the true dignity of the part so well, till Mr. Barnes brought it out again. For in spite of his prosing, and vain repetitions, the man is the Court Chamberlain, not the Court Fool he usually becomes, and if his bearing with his children at the outset is a little hard to reconcile with some of his later speeches, that may be but a natural development, and does not shake his personality. In any case his talk is not more inconsecutive than mine, which an old friend has drawn from me on a subject as close to my heart as Mr. Dick's memorial. And as good King George once said of the player in *Richard the Third*, "A good Lord Mayor—a very good Lord Mayor," I should like to express my parting thanks to "A good First Gravedigger—a very good First Gravedigger." I do not know when I have listened to his like.

PARROT PLAYERS.

By H. Chance Newton.

DO you know what Parrot Players are? If you do not, it is perhaps only fair to inform you that by the phrase I do not refer to those Cockatoo and Pretty Polly comedians who have been so patiently and cleverly trained by such artists as Mr. Charles Judge and Mlle. Marzella for the edification of music-hall audiences. No; by Parrot Players the present writer—(long a victim to these fearful wild fowl)—would indicate a certain class of histrions that infest what are often professionally (and proudly) called "the regular" theatres, the variety kind being—for some occult reason or other—supposed to be very "irregular." It is the fate of the said histrions to be "specially engaged"—a phrase they delight to see printed in connection with their names. The "special engagement" in question is nowadays mostly to impersonate some character in a popular success, a character which some more important actor has "created"—another phrase deeply beloved of actors—always, of course, when it is applied to themselves.

Whenever a new play *does* catch on in London—alas that the catching on should be so infrequent!—sundry tours: No. 1, No. 2, North Co., South Co., the Smalls, and the "Fit-ups," and so forth, are speedily booked all over the British Isles—not to mention certain cities in Spreadeagleland. Those responsible for sending out these companies at once cast about for groups of actors, not so much for their acting qualities as for some physical, vocal or physiognomical resemblance to the aforesaid "creators." In due course, rehearsals set in; many of these newly-engaged players rehearsing "on appro," as the saying is, and being dismissed from time to time in favour of some fresh player who may manifest more ability to "parrot" the aforesaid "creator"—masculine or feminine. When, after much sifting and weeding, the most parroting parrot has been found, and has been coached and coached and coached, and been compelled to witness the original production night after night in order minutely to note each trick of voice and visage, each gesture and bit of "business," these over stage-managed mimes—often the first to denounce the mere music-hall mimic—are let loose upon unsuspecting provincial and suburban playgoers, who thus have to pay for the antics of mere histrionic machines instead of actors allowed some little scope for their own intellects, a kind of thing which, with all respect for Mr. "Stanley Jones," some stage players *do* really possess in some measure.

It is, of course, no concern with the public that those whose pleasure (or pain) it is to have to go around the suburbs or the provinces writing theatrical notices have to meet these parrot players week by week in touring companies. But I have reason to believe that the playgoers are beginning to rebel against this kind of thing. It should be borne in mind that many of these playgoers, both suburban and provincial, have seen the "original" company either in town or when it has struck one or other of the ten or twelve No. 1 towns. And when these playgoers take a fancy to a piece such as *The Sign of the Cross*, *Charley's Aunt*, *For the Crown*, and so forth, it becomes somewhat irksome to go and find still more imitations of Mr. Wilson Barrett, Miss Maud Jeffries, Mr. Penley, Mr. Forbes Robertson, and Mrs. Patrick Campbell. I declare I have often entered theatres whereat these plays were being enacted and have thought certain of these original players were on the stage. Recently, I encountered at a suburban performance of *For the Crown* a Melitza who I could have sworn was Mrs. Patrick Campbell herself. The representative was a dead replica in face, figure, eyes, and intonation—yea, even to reproducing Mrs. Campbell's well-known little sob and

moan. How often, too, have some of us happened upon whole casts of that still extensively touring "religious" play, *The Sign of the Cross*, which re-echoed the voices of nearly every member of the original Lyric Company, even to a faithful imitation of the not too musical voice of that late earnest actor, Mr. Charles Hudson. As for Penley Parrots, they abound both in such plays as the still touring *Charley's Aunt* and *The Private Secretary*, even as at one time our young actors used to make it a point of honour to imitate Sir Henry Irving's voice.

In short, one may at the moment of writing go around all the suburban and provincial playhouses (old and new) and wherever there is located a touring company with a London success, there will be found these sometimes unwilling parrot-players. There is of course many a promising and even brilliant young stage player who would only too gladly play these parts on their own thought-out lines. But times are hard, especially in the theatrical profession; and unless your young actor has money on his own account (in which case he seldom takes any artistic trouble) he must take what offers, even if his own individuality never gets a chance to disclose itself.

This "parroting," like our old friend, the Whirligig of Time, brings in his revenges. One of these revenges takes the form of spoiling hundreds of promising actors and actresses. The other takes the more serious form (as far as theatrical managers are concerned) of disgusting a goodly number of playgoers to whom monotony, happily so lacking in our national climate, seems, as that old time County Councillor Dogberry would say, "as tedious as a king." Is there, then, any real need for this wholesale "parroting?" I pause for a reply.

LETTERS TO SOME DRAMATIC CRITICS.

To J. F. Nisbet, Esq.

SIR,—"The word critic surprises by himself" and "surprises" perhaps to an unusual degree in the case of succession to a critical chair from which approval or disapproval has carried so much weight and affected seriously so many actors from the days of Edmund Kean downwards. I find a *critic* described in a well-known dictionary as follows: "A person skilled in judging with propriety of any combination of objects, or of any work of art; and particularly of what are denominated the *Fine Arts*. A critic is one who, from experience, knowledge, habit, or taste, can perceive the difference in propriety and impropriety in objects or

works presented to his view; between the natural and unnatural; the high and the low, or lofty and mean; the congruous and incongruous; the correct and incorrect, according to the established rules of the art." Now, it may be noted that with some contentious people it is a favourite contention that there are not and cannot be any canons in any art. This I take to be a vain thing disputatiously imagined. At the same time, who shall deny that the fine art of acting must, by its very nature, be but too much judged according to purely subjective impressions? The critic of acting has not, like the professed judge of music or painting, the opportunity of actually comparing present with past work. These critics can betake themselves to a picture-gallery or a collection of scores where they can observe, as exactly as their capacities and industry will permit, by what means of technical art, to put aside inspiration, which is less tangible, acknowledged masters of the past gave expression, first to the breadth, then to the nice detail, of a given emotion to be conveyed to listeners and lookers. The critic of acting has no such resource. He can but search the records of his predecessors, whose judgment cannot have been one whit more objective than his own.

These considerations, which are perhaps worth some further examination in detail, must surely handicap to some extent any critic of acting; and it seems to me they must have especial force when such a critic takes up a pen on which a line of illustrious predecessors has conferred something of the dignity of a sceptre. The very consciousness of the influence which his impressions will carry may well make him, if he is conscientious, too prone at the outset, at least, to vagueness and hesitancy. Such a tendency was, I fancy, to be discerned in your work when you first "commenced critic" in the place which you have now occupied for a considerable time, and in which you have seen changes in your own style, perhaps, as well as in the public taste, a thing ever changing, so far at least as the lighter forms of dramatic entertainment are concerned. And if in your earlier days these changes of style included a disposition to condemn certain attempts and performances in a fashion which seemed to some too sweeping, why, that may have been in the nature of a reaction from the hesitation referred to. You may have been over anxious to show that you could speak out on occasion, and have thus created an unfortunate impression that, instead of being desirous to correct your own shortcomings as a writer, you were moved by an unreasonable prejudice against some of those on whom you sat in judgment. This may have been so, but I doubt

whether the impression had a very long life; as indeed it could hardly have in the case of a writer so cautelous and observant as yourself. Indeed it might be said, not unjustly, that, in spite or by reason of whatever changes you have gone through, you have succeeded in arriving at a happy medium between the excess, for purposes of a morning paper, of criticism and that mere *compte rendu*, of which a French critic of criticism said not many years ago that it was rapidly driving anything like true criticism off the boards—or rather off the formes. As to your criticisms of acting, I do not profess that I frequently find myself in agreement with them, but if I attached much importance to this I should stultify, or you might fairly say I stultified, what I have said before about subjective impressions. For you yourself, sir, should be as objective as anyone can be, if it were possible for a critic to conceal his identity as an actor effaces his personality in a disguise part. For your criticism on plays, where we come nearer to the possibility of fixed canons regarding construction and effect, it appears to me that you always attack that question with understanding and with diligent study, and that you have acquired the art of giving a "dismissal" with as little offence and brusqueness as may be. You have a really fine and close eye for what Charles Reade was wont to call the *articulation* of a play or an act of a play; and you can point out the defects in construction without being too technical and tedious over the dry bones. And if you could carry into practice your theories as to these and clothe them with appropriate covering, I conceive that you might be a good dramatist. Whether it is desirable for a dramatic critic to be also a dramatic author is a question involving too many vexed and vexing points to be now discussed. I do not suppose that your style would ordinarily be called brilliant, but you certainly sometimes have a happy turn of expression, which is an argument, if any new one were needed, against the pretension that the inhabitant of any particular country is, by the very fact of his birth, afflicted with an absence of all humorous perception. In fine, you have learnt so much and so well in many ways that, if you have not yet acquired any knowledge which may be useful to you in your appointed place, it may be predicted that it will not be long before you do acquire it. I will only add that I admire the variety of your intellectual interests, the wide range of your thought, and the fearlessness with which you speak out.

To William Winter, Esq.

Sir,—Your critical work concerning English players, as well

as that dealing with American actors and actresses who have become familiar figures to London audiences, is so well known, and, let me add, so deservedly appreciated, both by the student and by the *desocupado lector* that scarce any excuse can be needed for including a letter to you in a series addressed otherwise to English critics. The interchange, indeed, of such criticism as yours with that of our own best critics does very much to foster a good understanding by each of two great countries of the merits and the peculiarities that find favour on the other's best accredited stages. Your criticism has, to begin with, one merit which is conspicuous in the methods of almost all the players who have come to us with a reputation made on "the other side." It is thoroughly in earnest. It is studied just as much as a part is studied by a fine actor before he presents his conception in embodied form to the public. You go at the root of things, thinking rightly that it is not enough to consider the unique impression of any given passage in the rendering of a part. It has to be considered in connection with everything that has any bearing upon it in other scenes and sentences, and must not for a moment be taken as a thing standing alone, and to be treated alone with the most striking momentary effect that personal resources helped by stage artifices can obtain from it. This, of course, is the way in which every actor should treat a part. There are, unfortunately, too many actors, and actors of position, too, whose perception has never led them to this consideration of how a character should be thought over before it is attempted in public, or to the reflection that there is something radically wrong in a performance of any part in which the aim seems to be the attainment of certain brilliant pieces of execution which command applause, while the more level passages are held of no account, are, indeed, slurred over. Thus Betty, who seems to have been a really good actor, though his matured performances were terribly handicapped by his previous fame as the young Roscius, was astonished by the thoughtfulness of Macready, when yet a young man, in this direction. Macready, who was playing Frederic in *Lovers' Vows*, when his servant brought him his costume for the night, asked the man how he could suppose that a common soldier would have a white pocket handkerchief, and ordered him to bring a coloured one. On which Betty said, "Oh, my boy! You think of such things as these, do you?" Very likely Betty himself was in the habit of thinking of such things, but he was clearly surprised at meeting a young actor to whom they seemed worth consideration.

Now such a point of detail as this would no more have escaped

you in criticism than it would (if one can trust report) have escaped in study your distinguished countryman Lester Wallack, who was accustomed to study a part bit by bit, connecting it all together as he went on, until at last he had produced a harmonious whole in which there was no trace of patchwork to be discovered. And the fact that you always judge a performance from this standard, coupled with the unvarying courtesy with which you point out shortcomings, should render your work in criticism of special value to young and aspiring actors. As to its value to all readers who have any real care for dramatic art, you wrote only too modestly in the preface to your *Shadows of the Stage:* "The papers contained in this volume, chosen out of hundreds that the author has written on dramatic subjects, are assembled with the hope that they may be accepted in their present form as a part of the permanent record of our theatrical times." They certainly may be so accepted. They are written with insight and experience: they are the work of a man with a cosmopolitan taste and with a poetical mind which prevents his alertness to every nicety of a performance interfering for a moment with the breadth of his view. Consequently the criticism is close indeed, but never niggling or pedantic. If I were to pick out any peculiarity in your method which likes me less well than another, it would be a certain tendency to diffuseness (born maybe of your own diffuse yet scholarly reading) which, for instance, in your discussion of *Faust*, as given at the Lyceum, leads you into fanciful considerations where I confess I am unable to follow you. Indeed one of these if ruthlessly bared amounts to this: that Henry Irving improved upon Goethe's conception of Mephistopheles. Now, without yielding a fraction of an inch to you in admiration for Sir Henry's brilliant and strong impersonation, yet I do think this is both excessive and away from the purpose of criticism. But it would be ungracious indeed to dwell on any difference of opinion with one whose work has ever been so welcome. I prefer to end by picking from one of your essays a passage of very wide application. You have said that public taste is two-fold—it has a surface-liking and a deep instinctive preference—and you go on to say: "Observers . . . . presently perceive that the artist, whether actor or otherwise, who gives to the public not what it says it wants, but what it ought to have, is in the long run the victor. The deep preference is for the good thing, the real thing, the right. It is not intelligent. It does not go with thinking and reasoning. It does not pretend to have grounds of belief. It simply responds. But upon the

stage the actor who is able to reach it is omnipotent." This seems to me most capitally put, and, with my compliments upon it,

I am, &c., L. Anon.

THE DERBY THUNDER-BOX.

By T. Edgar Pemberton.

WHILE writing the life of T. W. Robertson I found, among the mass of material handed to me by his son, the following interesting story of the old "circuit" days of theatrical management. I was unable to use it then, but think it may be acceptable to the readers of these pages.

When William Robertson (the father of the author of *Caste*, and Mrs. Kendal, and all those other Robertsons who have done artistic work upon the English stage), was fourteen years old, he was travelling with his father's company, and to him we owe this record. Among the towns visited was Chesterfield, in Derbyshire, at that time a depôt for five hundred French prisoners. The majority of these were of good birth, and very little restraint was put upon them by the authorities.

The Robertsons during their annual stays in the town showed them much hospitality, and young William and his brother Harry soon became very intimate with Laurent Duchain, a French lad and prisoner not very much older than themselves. This poor fellow, who had commenced his career in the French navy, was consumptive, and he had an over-weening, but very natural, desire to return to his own home. His idea was, that if he could escape from Chesterfield, he might manage to get to Liverpool, and thence work his passage to America. It probably seemed more feasible to him to journey from that country to France than to attempt a direct passage from hostile England. He confided his wishes to the young Robertsons, and with the enthusiasm of their age they readily promised to aid in a plan so temptingly spiced with adventure.

Just at that time William and Harry were temporarily banished from the travelling company, and sent home to Derby to continue their interrupted education. The Derby theatre belonged to their father, and his house, under the care of a trusty matron, was close to it. This suggested opportunities. The theatre at that time was closed, and if only Duchain could contrive to reach Derby he might be hidden in it until the hue and cry that would surely follow his disappearance from Chesterfield would be over. The distance between the two towns is about twenty-four miles, and it was arranged that in the darkness of a winter's night Duchain should make the journey on foot, and announce his

arrival in Derby by throwing a pebble at his friends' bed-room window. In the meantime, they were to make arrangements for his reception and concealment. This they did by securing the keys of the theatre, which were in the possession of their father's housekeeper, and by making the ladies' dressing-room as comfortable as they could for the sojourn of their refugee.

From this room there was a staircase that reached the stage, and (thanks to a partition made to screen off the leading lady) he could, if necessary, escape unobserved, even if the outer room was entered, and gain a second flight of steps that led to the carpenter's gallery. The young conspirators then piled up set pieces all round the back of the stage, open at the bottom, and forming a burrow up to the landing from which the scenery was worked, and at the termination of which was a trap door that passed over the false roof across the pit that enabled anyone to reach the exterior roof of the building. The "thunder-box" was constructed in the good old-fashioned style (before the less convincing "sheet-iron thunder" took its place) over the scenery, and it ran all round the stage, broad at the head and afterwards narrowed, so as to concentrate the sound and give the effect of distance. It was obvious that when this convenient construction was emptied, and furnished, at its broad end, with an old stage carpet and the bloody pillow used in the stirring, murderous melodrama, *The Travellers Benighted*, it would, in case of dire emergency, prove a most excellent hiding-place for the fugitive French prisoner. Then, as they dare not light a self-incriminating fire in the empty theatre, they purchased some smokeless charcoal; and so far all was well.

On the appointed night, or rather at six o'clock on a miserable November morning, the unfortunate Duchain, soaked with rain, foot-weary, and torn to pieces with a hacking cough, gave his pebble signal at his enthusiastic friends' window, and, after a "warm" by the kitchen fire, was conducted to the theatre accompanied by his fellow conspirators, "two quartern loaves, a bottle of gin, a pound of ready-cooked sausages, two pots of preserve, and an old fighting sword." In darkness, and holding each others' hands, they groped their way to the dressing-room, and there, though they dare not light a fire, and the charcoal would not burn, Duchain was regaled, and ultimately, wrapped up in two blankets, a horse-cloth, and an old "Shylock's gaberdine," and left to pass his time until the next evening with the rats that infested the otherwise deserted playhouse. What these unhappy animals found to eat there goodness only knows! Possibly they discovered the "property banquets," and "made believe" they

were real! Anyhow they scampered across Duchain's bed, and made him miserable. I wonder whether he was as miserable as the rats! I always fancy that these poor harried creatures are conscious of the hatred in which they are almost universally held, and are profoundly wretched. When his protectors came back to him they found that he had contrived to extract some warmth from the charcoal, but was depressed by the darkness and his surroundings, as well he might be when we are told that they consisted of "the skeletoned outlines of the gloomy traps, decayed pieces of armour, masks, heads of mutilated comic figures, skulls, and relics of imitations of decayed humanity, some grotesque, some horrible, the collected refuse of years of accumulation, resembling a fœtid mausoleum, the effect of which was truly dispiriting and oppressive, like living in a vault, in which every object around you reminded you of mortality in a grim, enlarged, repulsive, and most offensive form."

All went fairly well until the *Derby Mercury* advertised the escape of a French prisoner, giving an accurate description of him, and offering a reward for his apprehension. This made the three conspirators very uneasy. Duchain thought seriously of seclusion in the thunder-box, and William and Harry were by no means happy when, in reply to an apparently casual inquiry, an official informed them that any one conniving at the flight of a prisoner of war was guilty of treason and would assuredly be hanged! But the three were made of the right stuff. The English youths trusted implicitly in the young Frenchman's honour, and their one idea was to be as vigilant and careful as possible. But their nerves were to be sorely tried. When after an enforced absence the Robertsons revisited their friend, he told them that the deserted theatre had been mysteriously entered. His story was that at about three o'clock in the afternoon he distinctly heard footsteps in the gentlemens' room, that whoever was responsible for them had approached the ladies' room, tried the door handle, and finding it secured from the inside, had made his way to the stage, and, after remaining there some time, had proceeded up the landing reaching to the roof. As the footsteps became hushed by distance Duchain had crept out of his hiding-place, and was soon face to face with a terrible sight. Through the ventilator, into the gallery, dropped the figure of a man. To him, through the same uncanny entrance, a number of packages were handed, and these he stowed away under the seats devoted to the gods. Then by means of a rope he climbed up into the ventilator, disclosing in his ascent that his arms were bare, his stockings down, and his face, arms, and legs a horrible

supernatural blue. This was most disquieting news. According to tradition (which no sane person ever doubted) the Derb, Theatre was periodically haunted by the ghost of one O'Brian an old actor who had declared that if possible he would in spirit form some day revisit "his old shop," and who, long after he was dead and buried, had, on the authority of the stage door-keeper, been seen in the pale glimpses of the moon cleaning his paste buckles and sword belts, and moodily counting his salary. Undoubtedly Duchain had seen O'Brian's ghost hiding his properties, and, in spite of stout hearts, three sets of teeth chattered in the silence of the deserted theatre. But after a night's rest (or unrest!) William, who was resourceful, had an idea; and, after a little research, and a careful following in the track of the supposed ghost, cleared up the mystery. Mr. Mackenzie, a wholesale cloth merchant in the Derby market-place, had permission to keep his superabundant stock in the theatre, but having, during the absence of the elder Robertson, had some difference with his housekeeper, was refused the keys. He was occasionally assisted in his business by a relative named Loin, a dyer by trade, and there could be no doubt that this Loin had, red (or rather *blue*) handed at his work, entered the theatre by a way he had found out for himself to stow away the Mackenzie packages in the usual manner. This so satisfactorily cleared away the supposed visitation of O'Brian's ghost that the three friends made merry over a bottle of cowslip wine; but they now knew that the theatre might at any time be entered by people who did not possess its keys, and their vigilance was redoubled.

An uneventful fortnight elapsed, and, as there was no further inquiry as to Duchain's whereabouts, it was decided that the hue and cry was over, and that the time had come when he might safely set off for Liverpool. Their united means amounted to thirty-six shillings, but they estimated that that would be enough, not only for coach hire, but for a week's sustenance. If questions were asked as to his identity he was well prepared with answers. A useful, harmless, member of the Robertson Company was Monsieur D'Egville, the French ballet-master, and in order that Duchain might account for his foreign accent, it was calmly settled that he should pass as his illegitimate son. To give colour to this, Duchain was to carry with him letters, composed by the young Robertsons, and supposed to be in the handwriting of his suddenly adopted father. The compilation of these gave the unscrupulous conspirators infinite delight, for they dropped into them many of the best-hated school-copy-book maxims, such as "Evil communications corrupt good

manners," "Wilful waste makes woful want," "Virtue is its own reward," "Honour your father and your mother," and other provoking red rags constantly flourished in the face of would-be harmless, but forced-to-be intractable, young John Bull. In these audacious documents the instructive Monsieur D'Egville, while giving his reputed son the soundest advice of the period, informed him that he could no longer afford to maintain him, but that as he had thoroughly taught him his profession, he had no doubt he would soon make a fortune for himself in the vast area of the United States. Poor Monsieur D'Egville! He is described as a stiff, formal, proud Frenchman, and a master of his profession. It was perhaps fortunate for him (and for others) that in the course of one of the Robertson tours he was buried at Burton-on-Trent, oblivious of the malign use that had been made of his blameless name.

But, in spite of the near approach of Duchain's departure, the sheltering thunder-box had still to be used. A Mr. Lewis, who travelled with some automatical figures, arrived at Derby, and asked for the hire of the theatre. Shown over it by the punctilious housekeeper, she discovered in it, in the ladies' dressing-room, such evidence of already missed empty jam pots, and so forth, that she decided that while she was mistress of the situation it should no more be visited by her young masters. Duchain in the meantime had actually hidden himself in the thunder-box, which had been described to him by his enthusiastic friends as "the stronghold and secret pass among the mountains." The upshot of this unlucky episode was that Duchain who (after a weary while) came unscathed, but dusty and half-stifled from the thunder-box, had to go for a long time without food. The trusty housekeeper was obdurate, and it was not until these ingenious young Robertsons had persuaded her that they had merely used the ladies' dressing-room as a quiet place for study, and had therein left their indispensable Latin grammars, that they were once more allowed to have the keys of the theatre.

The rest is soon told. Without much difficulty "Young Master D'Egville" went off by coach, and, having reached Liverpool, endeavoured to carry out his purpose. But it was without avail. In his broken health he was unacceptable as a seaman, and after a miserable existence, in the course of which he endeavoured hard to gain honourable employment, he died. No doubt the moral of the story is that it would have been wiser to remain a prisoner at Chesterfield than to attempt an escape (however well planned) through the Derby Thunder-box.

At the Play.

IN LONDON.

THE past month has been remarkable in no sense. October is always regarded by managers with favour as particularly kindly to their interests, and at most of the theatres their belief has received satisfactory confirmation during the past four weeks. The public, however, has shown itself little disposed to patronise performances other than those possessing indubitable attractions for them, the consequence being that while here and there "full houses" are the nightly record, elsewhere the attendance has been of the smallest.

THE LIARS.

A Comedy, in Four Acts, by HENRY ARTHUR JONES. Produced at the Criterion Theatre, October 6.

Colonel Sir Christopher Deering	Mr. CHARLES WYNDHAM	Archibald Coke ..	Mr. ALFRED BISHOP
Edward Falkner ..	Mr. T. B. THALBERG	Mrs. Crespin	Miss JANETTE STEER
Gilbert Nepean ..	Mr. HERBERT STANDING	Beatrice Ebernoe ..	Miss CYNTHIA BROOKE
George Nepean ..	Mr. LESLIE KENYON	Dolly Coke	Miss SARAH BROOKE
Freddie Tatton ..	Mr. A. VANE TEMPEST	Lady Rosamund Tatton	Miss IRENE VANBRUGH
		Lady Jessica Nepean..	Miss MARY MOORE

In his new comedy, Mr. Henry Arthur Jones evidently aims at producing a faithful picture of modern society, or rather, of a certain section of modern society. In one quarter at least, the piece has been hailed as equal, if not superior, to the best work of Augier and Pailleron. Such a claim, and we hasten to add that it is advanced by a critic both of experience and ability, is in our judgment simply ridiculous. *The Liars*, we cheerfully admit, is a clever and ingenious piece of work. The dialogue as a rule is smart, and the construction, particularly of the third act, neat. But the play itself abounds in solecisms, and tends to show that the writer has drawn his facts from his own inner consciousness rather than from observation. Mr. Jones is nothing if not daring. The sexual problem has for him an irresistible attraction. He loves to deal with subjects which Suburbia regards as improper. He deals with them, however, in a suburban fashion.

One has only to compare his methods with those of Ibsen to realise how near to truth the latter is, how far from it the former. In his analyses of the human heart Ibsen declares himself a master. Mr. Jones, on the other hand, is content with the superficies of things. In place of handling his theme openly and directly, he skirts round it; hints much, affirms nothing. In the painting of his characters he is prodigal of his colours; the result is, however, merely a distorted and exaggerated picture. "People don't do such things," one is tempted to say; or, if they do, they accomplish their aims in quite different manner. Mr. Jones has all the appearance of a prude who describes fast life from hearsay, and who depends upon his imagination for the way in which fast people conduct themselves. He is the Mr. Stead of dramatic literature. He has heard that it not unusual for a lady to dine alone in a private room with a gentleman whose motives are certainly not of the best, and so he gives us in *The Liars* a representation of the scene, of a kind of which an Eton schoolboy would expose the absurdity. He believes that illicit *amours* are freely hinted at in social gatherings, and so he makes Mr. Freddie Tatton's guests discuss the suspected *liaison* between Edward Falkner and Lady Jessica Nepean, after a fashion that is simply intolerable, and out of all drawing. To place such work on a level with that of Augier and Pailleron, is to confound criticism with mere unmeaning adulation. Mr. Jones's comedy, which possesses many of the elements of farce, may be amusing, ingenious, and smartly written, but it certainly has no title to rank as a masterpiece.

Edward Falkner, whose adventurous career has made him the hero of the hour, falls passionately in love with Lady Jessica Nepean, wife of a rough, outspoken, and notably brusque individual. In all other respects, Falkner is supposed to be the soul of honour, but he is prepared to sacrifice reputation, position, conscience, everything to his insensate desire to win a woman who, the author is at the greatest pains to show, possesses no redeeming quality, except a pretty face. The truth is suspected by her husband, and known to a mutual friend, Sir Christopher Deering. This latter endeavours to bring Falkner to reason; but unsuccessfully. Meanwhile, Gilbert Nepean is called away on business, and after a singularly brutal scene with his wife he departs, leaving the field open to his rival. Falkner, acting upon a hint from Lady Jessica, proceeds to a little river-side hotel, where, presently, he is joined by the lady, who shows herself quite disposed to share a *tête-à-tête* dinner with him. For the necessities of his play, the author decrees that the two shall be

interrupted at every instant by the arrival of various characters, but all this is effected in the lamest and most conventional manner. Serious danger is threatened by the intrusion of George Nepean, Gilbert's brother, who declares that it is his duty to telegraph to Lady Jessica's husband news of the discovery he has made. The third act is devoted to the various expedients resorted to by Lady Jessica and her friends to hoodwink Gilbert Nepean, by convincing him that his wife's companion at the "Star and Garter" was not Falkner, but a lady friend. The complications here are exceedingly cleverly contrived, and lead to the most amusing results. In the end, however, Falkner avows the truth, with an emphasis which the author might well have spared us. In the last act matters are straightened out, it can hardly be said in anything like a satisfactory manner. Lady Jessica, characteristically fickle, declines to throw in her lot with Falkner, and goes off, comfortably tucked under her husband's arm, to supper at the Savoy.

Those, notwithstanding, who only demand a capital evening's diversion, will find much to repay them in *The Liars*. The acting alone is worth a visit to the Criterion. The part of Sir Christopher, it is true, offers Mr. Charles Wyndham no new opportunity for the display of his talent—it is a character he has played again and again under various names. But he brings to it all the old qualities of geniality, tenderness, humour, and sprightliness. Miss Mary Moore has seldom been seen to greater advantage than as Lady Jessica. Her sketch of the vain, frivolous, butterfly woman is altogether admirable. Excellent, also, is the Edward Falkner of Mr. T. B. Thalberg, although it is a pity this clever actor cannot quite rid himself of the habit of, so to speak, "catapulting" his words. The remaining characters are all effectively handled, even down to the smallest.

Never Again.

Farcical Comedy in Three Acts, adapted from "Le Truc de Seraphin," by Maurice Desvallieres and Antony Mars. Produced at the Vaudeville Theatre, October 11.

Ribot	Mr. George Giddens	Seraphin	Mr. Cairns James
Vignon	Mr. Allan Aynesworth	Mme. Ribot	Miss Maggie Holloway Fisher
Planchette	Mr. Hubert Willis	Marceline	Miss Mary Clayton
Katzenjammer	Mr. Ferdinand Gottschalk	Octavie	Miss Agnes Miller
Lavrille	Mr. Robb Harwood		

Once more we have to record the production of one of those rough-and-tumble, go-as-you-please farces with which criticism has absolutely no concern. If you can take pleasure in a noisy harlequinade, then you will be delighted with *Never Again;* if you cannot, the best advice we can give is to leave the piece sternly alone. The story is simply a remodelling of old

material, and presents hardly a feature that can be described as novel. M. Ribot is an elderly gentleman who has not yet given up the pleasures of flirtation. His wife and family, however, believe him to be a model of propriety, and when by means of an anonymous letter, suspicion is at length awakened, it falls upon his son-in-law, Vignon. To save his father-in-law's reputation the latter acquiesces in the deception until the moment arrives when by a plausible tale he is able to clear both himself and his wife's father. Of the plot it is perhaps unnecessary to say more. The ingenious reader will be able to fill in the details for himself from his knowledge of the manner in which French farces of this pattern are usually developed. Nor are we able to speak in terms of praise of the acting unless we concede, on the principle that "who drives fat oxen should himself be fat," that a noisy and silly farce should be played in noisy and silly fashion without any regard to artistic effect. From this condemnation we must except one performance—that of Mr. Ferdinand Gottschalk, an actor of rare intelligence, whose portrait of the vain old German musician, Katzenjammer, cannot be too highly commended. We have indeed seldom met with a sketch so carefully finished, or so pleasing in its fidelity to nature. Amid much that was merely boisterous and inane, his impersonation stood out as a masterly bit of truthful observation. As regard the remaining members of the company we can only compliment them upon the strength of their lungs and the marvellous staying-powers of their throats.

My Lady's Orchard.

A Play, in One Act, by Mrs. Oscar Beringer. Produced at the Avenue Theatre, October 2.

John of Courtenay	Mr. Charles Brookfield	Azalais	Miss Vera Beringer
Dennis	Mr. Frederick Volpe	Page	Miss Laura Farrell
Pierre	Mr. Sidney Warden	Lisette	Miss Katherine Stewart
Scrivener	..Mr. V. Brockbank	Bertrand of Auvergne	Miss Esme Beringer

In her little piece Mrs. Beringer makes a bold attempt to reproduce the atmosphere and the speech of mediæval times. Unhappily, her endeavour is more conspicuous for daring than for success. *My Lady's Orchard* is written in a style that is pretentious rather than true; there is an abundance of fine language to be discovered in it, but very few ideas. Nor is the story particularly well wrought out. John of Courtenay, a Saxon seigneur, has espoused an empty-headed maiden named Azalais, who is momentarily led to listen to the impassioned pleadings of the troubadour—or, as the authoress describes him, the Wild Nightingale—Bertrand of Auvergne. For what

appears to the unprejudiced observer a foolishly long period, John puts up with this unseemly state of matters, apparently without a protest. But at length the youth's imprudence exhausts the elder man's patience, and a duel is decided on. Unexpectedly Azalais comes upon the scene, but being informed that the combat is simply a friendly joust at arms, she remains to watch the sport. Eventually Bertrand is killed, while Azalais, still convinced that it is merely a game of make-believe, is led away by her husband. The story is related with so little art as to be quite unconvincing, nor is it possible for the listener to feel the slightest sympathy either for husband, wife, or lover. The two principal parts were assigned to the Misses Esmé and Vera Beringer, who woefully overplayed them. As John of Courtenay Mr. Brookfield essayed a rôle wholly out of his line.

Oh! Susannah!

A Farcical Comedy, in Three Acts, by Mark Ambient, A. Atwood, and R. Vaun. Produced at the Royalty Theatre, October 5.

John Sheppard ..	Mr. Charles Glenney	Susannah Sheppard	Miss Alice Mansfield
Mr. Plant	Mr. Alfred Maltby	Ruby	.. Miss Bella Graves
Lieutenant Andrew Merry, R.N.	Mr. L. Power	Pearl	.. Miss Grace Vicat
		Mrs. O'Hara	Miss Kate Kearney
Hon. Waverley Vane	Mr. Charles J. Bell	Tupper	.. Miss Clara Jecks
Flora	.. Miss Mary Milton	Aurora..	.. Miss Louie Freear

We really have not the heart to be angry with the authors of *Oh! Susannah!* Individuals who could conceive and write such inept rubbish carry their own punishment in themselves, and the worst feeling aroused by their achievement is pity. For some unexplained reason Mr. Ambient's name is printed on the programme in larger type than that accorded to his companions. If the fact denotes that he is chiefly responsible for the piece, we can only bestow upon him a double measure of compassion. *Oh! Susannah!* is a feeble imitation of *Charley's Aunt* and other farces belonging to the same class. The story treats of the doings of a young and impecunious doctor who has secretly married a charming girl. Dr. John Sheppard is the happy possessor of nothing a year, but is buoyed up by the hope that a certain maiden aunt, the Susannah of the title, will confer an income upon him. Miss Sheppard's lawyer, apprised of her readiness to do so, endeavours to palm off one of his own daughters upon the unsuspecting doctor, but naturally with no great success. Meanwhile, a chum, addicted to practical joking, determines to dress up as Miss Susannah. Sheppard learns of his design, and prepares for it. So when the real Susannah appears she meets with a boisterous reception, is hustled from

pillar to post, and finally pitched into a bath, from which the doctor has just emerged. Happily matters are explained before any serious damage has been done; Miss Susannah's wrath is appeased, and upon her promise to provide for her nephew and his young wife the curtain falls.

The piece would hardly call for any notice at all were it not for the marvellously clever performance of Miss Louie Freear as a slatternly, illiterate, and precocious, little maid-of-all-work. In such characters Miss Freear has made her reputation, but it is safe to say she has never had opportunities so great as in *Oh! Susannah!* or used them to better advantage. Nothing more realistic or, we are tempted to write, more artistic, has been seen on the stage for many a day. And it is not only in the expression of humour that Miss Freear succeeds. The part has a very distinct touch of pathos in it, and this the actress brings forcibly into view. One cannot easily forget the quaint little figure she presents, but its recollection is no less apt to evoke tears than smiles. Aurora loves the doctor, whom she has elevated to the position of her hero, and the uncouth, awkward, yet gentle manner in which she strives to show her devotion is singularly moving. It is a study so complete, so life-like, and so touching that even the highest praise must not be grudged to it. Beside this the remaining characters fall into comparative unimportance. Mr. Charles Glenney, nevertheless, is to be commended for his pleasantly restrained sketch of the doctor, and Miss Mary Milton for her graceful performance as his wife.

The Mermaids.

A Submarine Musical Fantasy, written by Gayer Mackay. Music by Claud Nugent. Additional lyrics by Charles Brookfield. Produced at the Avenue Theatre, October 2.

John Doricus	Mr. Frank Wyatt
Rufus Mullet	Mr. Cecil Lawrence
Sylvia Whiting ..	Miss Ruth Davenport
Marina	Miss Topsy Sinden
Anne Chovey	Miss May Marton
Sir James Barker ..	Mr. Arthur Helmore
Algie Fitzroy	Mr. C. M. Hallard
Maud Fitzroy	Miss Julie Ring
Lady Barker	Miss Lottie Venne

The story of *The Mermaids* is simplicity itself. A party of tourists is wrecked and precipitated to the bottom of the sea. There they are discovered by a number of animated fish, mermaids, and mermen, who become enamoured of the new-comers. At the moment when matters reach a crisis the intruders are rescued by a friendly crew from above, and, bidding farewell to the denizens of the deep, float upwards. The piece is written in the spirit of topsy-turveydom familiarised by Mr. Gilbert, but with none of Mr. Gilbert's ability and humour. It is, in short, a clumsy bit of stagecraft, from the initial idea of which some-

thing infinitely more amusing might have been elaborated by an experienced hand. Of the lyrics it is difficult to speak, as the last thing a singer appears to concern him, or herself, about is the intelligible delivery of the words of a song. Mr. Claud Nugent's music makes no pretence to originality, although some of his numbers, after an amateur fashion, are fairly tuneful. Miss Lottie Venne proved as amusing as the author would allow her to be in the part of a well-to-do matron, and Miss Ruth Davenport sang pleasantly at times. But, taken altogether, the acting calls for no particular remark.

The Children of the King.

A Fairy Tale, in Three Acts, translated from the German by Carl Armbruster, from the German of Ernest Romer. Revised by John Davidson. Music composed by Engelbert Humperdinck. Produced at the Court Theatre, October 13.

The Prince	Mr. Martin Harvey	The Witch	Miss Isabel Bateman
The Minstrel	Mr. Dion Boucicault	The Innkeeper's Daughter..	Miss Hilda Spong
The Broombinder ..	Mr. Herbert Ross	The Stablemaid ..	Miss Lotta Linthicum
The Woodcutter ..	Mr. Fred Thorne	The Barmaid	Miss Neilson
The Elder of the Council ..	Mr. Robert Soutar	The Broombinder's Daughter	Miss Lina Verdi
The Innkeeper	Mr. G. Bernage	The Goose-girl.. ..	Miss Cissie Loftus

Most sincerely do we wish it were possible to declare *The Children of the King* to be a good piece, for it contains many of the qualities in which our stage at present is only too obviously deficient. Fantasy, imagination, and poetry are all to be discovered in this dainty little play; and yet, for reasons which lie on the surface, the result is disappointing. Even a fairy tale must possess sufficient material to fill out an entertainment in three acts, nor can want of plot be atoned for by the most exquisite setting and beautiful accessories. In point of fact the new piece is altogether too thin and gossamer to satisfy the cravings of a public accustomed to more generous fare; while, in a mistaken desire to add substance to his work, the author has only succeeded in becoming tiresome. This is the more to be regretted seeing that at times he can be both forcible and dramatic. The conclusion of the second act may be cited as a striking example of the truth of the statement. But, unfortunately, it is the only really moving situation in that act, and quite half-an-hour devoted to useless detail is consumed in reaching it. Yet, with all its shortcomings, there is much to praise in *The Children of the King*, and most earnestly do we wish it better luck than, we fear, it is likely to have.

The story is founded on one of Grimm's fairy tales, and shows how a young and adventurous Prince, having cast off his father's yoke, chances upon a beautiful maiden, and incontinently falls in love with her. This passion the Goose-girl, as she is called, immediately reciprocates, but a barrier to their happiness is found in the

threatening attitude of her supposed grandmother, a witch. It appears, also, that the honest burghers of Hellabourne are in want of a ruler, and they are informed by the witch that the first person to enter their gates on the morrow after the stroke of twelve shall eventually be promoted to that position. Meanwhile the Prince, believing that the Goose-girl has repented of her bargain, hurries away and accepts the offer of a prosperous innkeeper in Hellabourne to act as his swineherd. The Goose-girl, on the other hand, has discovered a friend in the Minstrel who leads her to the town, and when the doors are thrown open it is she who in her ragged garb first steps across their threshold. The angry citizens at once repudiate her, and drive her along with the Prince beyond their walls. For months the devoted couple wander about the mountains disconsolate, until at length, footsore, weary, and starving, they find themselves at the point of death. The Minstrel, however, is again at hand to assist them; and having succeeded in convincing the good people of Hellabourne of their error, he persuades them to accept the loving pair as their future King and Queen.

Very pleasing and full of charm is all this, but lacking in the necessary fibre required to constitute a play. The dialogue is for the most part long-winded, and, although smooth and expressive, shows few traces of the inspiring genius of a poet of Mr. John Davidson's reputation. Herr Humperdinck's music is, in itself, delightful and entirely worthy of the clever composer of *Hansel und Gretel*. In this instance, however, he has limited himself to supplying, with the exception of one or two snatches of song, an orchestral score intended to illustrate or interpret the words spoken on the stage. The result is scarcely happy, the listener being torn between his anxiety to follow the course of the story and his desire not to miss any of the beauties of the music. The arrangement also is productive of a certain measure of deliberation on the part of the actors, who are compelled to measure their utterances by the movements in the orchestra. Mr. Martin Harvey made a picturesque and gallant Prince, and Mr. Dion Boucicault a vigorous and spirited Minstrel. Miss Cissie Loftus, on the other hand, while very tender and sweet, played the part of the Goose-girl in much too subdued a manner. The little play has been beautifully mounted.

Carl Rosa Opera.

The amount of support bestowed by opera-goers upon the Carl Rosa performances at Covent Garden last month afforded abundant justification in a sense for the enterprise of the

company in taking the leading London opera-house for a mid-autumn season. And yet in the opinion of many that enterprise was a mistake, for the reason that it had to be carried on simultaneously with the work of the regular provincial tour, and thus necessitated the cutting up of the troupe into two portions, neither of which could be considered complete without the other. The artists had to rush backwards and forwards between the metropolis and the places (Manchester, Sheffield, and Bristol, for example) in which the Carl Rosa Company was fulfilling its usual autumn engagements. Two orchestras and two choruses were employed under various conductors, and, whatever those working in the country may have been like, certainly the band and chorus at Covent Garden were infinitely below the average Carl Rosa standard. The result has shown itself in a most unequal series of representations—some fairly good, some extremely poor, and absolutely none to be compared with the splendid performances witnessed in past days under the direction of the lamented founder of this institution. Perhaps the least unsatisfactory of all was the rendering of Puccini's charming opera *La Bohème*, which opened the season on Oct. 2, being then given for the first time in London with a measure of success that foreshadowed a larger number of repetitions than have actually taken place. The second novelty of the campaign, the new Celtic opera *Diarmid*—written by the Marquis of Lorne and composed by Mr. Hamish MacCunn—was underlined for production on Oct. 23, too late for present notice.

IN THE PROVINCES.

As we briefly announced last month, Sir Henry Irving began his provincial tour at Cardiff on September 20 in *The Bells* and *A Story of Waterloo*. He was greeted with enthusiasm in the streets, in the theatre, and in leading articles in the local press. "Through the whole of his career," says the *Western Mail*, "he has acted up to one aim—to deal with acting not merely as a profession, but as an art. His lead has been followed by every actor of note in London—the Hares, the Bancrofts, Toole, Wilson and Oscar Barrett, George Alexander, Daly, and Harris, all in their different ways. Plays are mounted now with befitting 'props,' from the rich, but quiet, dressing at the St. James's to the gorgeous pageants at the Savoy and Drury Lane. Irving's advice to young actors is, 'The truth is, that the cardinal secrets of success in acting are found within, while practice is the surest

way of fertilising these germs.' Of his victories upon the stage it is not necessary to speak further. Through many of Shakspere's works he has laboured to show us what truths were hidden from ordinary eyes. He has ever been ready to lend a helping hand. As a reformer he has worked hard, and leaves for all critics as to theatres and morality these words:—'Depend upon two things—that the theatre, as a whole, is never below the average moral sense of the time; and that the inevitable demand for admixture, at least, of wholesome sentiment in every sort of dramatic production brings the ruling tone of the theatre, whatever drawback may exist, up to the highest level at which the general morality of the time can truly be registered.'" "The interesting feature of the performance," the *Mail* adds, "was the impression made upon the audience. Instead of the gaiety and chatter usually heard in the vestibules, nothing but subdued comments were heard amongst the audience, and more than one person was heard exclaiming that the influence was almost as great as that of a cathedral service."

Next came a week at Birmingham, where Sir Henry Irving was joined, for the first time during this tour, by Miss Terry. *Madame Sans-Gêne* was not the least important feature in their programme. "Miss Terry," says the *Daily Gazette*, "acted with unflagging zeal and with irresistible sweetness. Despite the wearying exactions of her part—a part which compels her to be on the stage with scarcely an interval from first to last—she waxed rather than waned in power as the drama progressed, and in the final impressive scenes with Napoleon Bonaparte displayed a resource of energy which was fairly astonishing. Throughout the drama she is the central figure about whom all others revolve, and upon whose words and actions all developments and crises depend. By the side of her impersonation all other efforts seemed small, and compared with hers all other parts seemed dwarfed." The *Daily Post* took occasion to review Sir Henry Irving's original success in *The Bells*, especially in reference to the sometimes rancorous depreciation he had to encounter soon after that event.

After a triumphant engagement at Nottingham the company went to Leeds and Sheffield. The *Daily Telegraph* in the latter had a leading article on the visit. "This week," it says, "Sheffield theatre-goers will have the pleasure of welcoming our greatest living actor, Sir Henry Irving. The welcome, we are confident, will be a hearty one; and there can be no doubt that we voice the opinion of all classes in Sheffield when the hope is expressed that Sheffield may have many opportunities for repeating it. This desire to do honour

to a great artist has little in common with the depraved taste for gossip which induces ladies' newspapers and the sixpenny magazines to print columns of tittle-tattle about every fourth-rate performer who happens to obtain a little cheap notoriety upon the boards. Sir Henry Irving stands above that. Indeed, without misuse of language, his place in the social life of to-day may be spoken of as unique. When the historian of the twentieth century sums up the tendencies of the nineteenth, there can be little doubt that one of the figures which will stand out prominently on his canvas will be the creator of Becket and Mathias, of King Arthur and Mephistopheles. For consider what this man has done. There may be two opinions as to his merits as an actor. Some think, as we do, that they are superlative; some, that they are over-rated. But there is no room for question that to him, and, in a sense, to him alone, is due the position which the stage at present occupies in public esteem. Others, no doubt, have done their share of the work; but his is the principal, the outstanding figure; and of him more truly than of any other can it be said that he found the temple of the English drama brick, and left it marble. Sir Henry Irving has opened John Bull's eyes; and now the honest man takes his wife to the play with an easy conscience. Mankind needs amusement; and the actor's art supplies it in one of its most fascinating forms. Amusement, however, may be either elevating or degrading; and Sir Henry Irving has proved practically to the whole nation that the brief traffic of the stage may be the former. One comes away from seeing *Faust* or *Hamlet* with very much the same feelings as one has on leaving a great cathedral; but the moral influence of the stage—for good, at least—is apt to be exaggerated nowadays. Sir Henry Irving fought to overcome a social disability. He has succeeded so well that, instead of being under a ban, as formerly, the actor finds his stage-craft almost playing the part of an aureole round his head. It is difficult to over-estimate the value of the work done by Sir Henry Irving in bringing the refining influence of a great art into vital touch with the currents of social being. All honour is due to those who, filled with an ambition akin to his own, have so ably seconded his efforts. Not the least of these is the lady whose gracious influence is inseparably linked with his. If Sir Henry Irving roused the nation's intellect, Miss Ellen Terry attracted the nation's heart. But it is Sir Henry Irving who has done the lion's share of the fighting; and it is meet that the nation at large should pay him the homage due to his victorious generalship."

Courage has rarely, perhaps, been a prominent virtue among the dramatists of our own day; yet we may confess to having felt a certain measure of surprise upon hearing the announcement that an author of the standing and known views of Mr. W. S. Gilbert had, in imitation of the tactics of the third or fourth-rate playwright, decided to submit his latest production to the judgment of a provincial rather than a metropolitan audience. The author of *Brantinghame Hall*, undeterred by the reception of previous essays in the way of serious drama, has made another attempt to adapt the well-known and until lately well-liked *genre* of comedy known as Gilbertian humour to the requirements of the Criterion rather than the Savoy Theatre. For the rest, one can only say that the part of Sir Cuthbert Jameson in *The Fortune Hunter* has a strong air of having been written with a view to its impersonation by Mr. Charles Wyndham.

The Fortune Hunter, produced at the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, on September 27, is a three-act play turning upon an almost dormant article in the French Civil Code, providing that, if a man marries before he is twenty-five without the consent of his parents, the marriage may be nullified either by his parents or by himself on applying to the French courts. This iniquitous provision is so incomprehensible to the ordinary English mind that the play is at the outset menaced with the gravest of all dangers—the danger of being mistaken for a burlesque. Unfortunately, too, the first act is almost entirely made up of comedy interludes, thus assisting the delusion in such cases where it has been once formed. In the second act, in which the play reaches its highest level of excellence, the fortune hunter, having married a rich woman, finds that through a bank crash she has lost her fortune. He then resolves to set the law as above stated in motion, having in ultimate view a dowager duchess, *née* American heiress, and alleges in excuse that he is commencing proceedings in order to prevent his father from anticipating him in doing so. But his wife is seen by his parents, who, after falling completely in love with her, tell her they have never had any notion of seeking to separate her from her husband by force of law. The moment in which the wife thus first realises her husband's worthlessness closes the act with a note of pathos and dramatic power which is far above anything else in the play. The transition from this to the weak, drivelling farce with which the third act opens would shock the susceptibilities of even the least imaginative of an audience, and perhaps twenty minutes elapse before the main thread of the story is again taken

up. The husband, now repentant, wishes his wife to forget, but she has been too cruelly undeceived, and cannot. He then thinks of suicide, but this would work an additional injury to his now penniless wife by depriving her of the benefit of his life insurance. He knows that Sir Cuthbert Jameson had been a suitor for her before her marriage, and in a fine scene he provokes his one-time rival to challenge him to a duel, and during the fight allows himself to be killed.

Miss Fortescue, who played the heroine, gave to the character the exquisite womanly touches necessary to make the varying moods of the character a harmonious, natural, and lovable whole. The part fits her as though it had been made for her; as in all probability it was. Mr. Luigi Lablache did all that was possible with the character of the recreant husband; and Mr. Edmund Maurice was not unduly imitative of actors who loom larger in the public eye than he does. Miss Cicely Richards gave an altogether admirable portrait of a wealthy, good-hearted, and slightly vulgar American verging upon the "fatal forties."

IN PARIS.

At the Odéon, last month, *Les Menottes*, a three-act comedy by M. Beaubousq, had a success which was chiefly due to the excellent acting of all concerned. The play shows talent undoubtedly; but M. Beaubousq's attempt to introduce Ibsenist ideas into a play dealing with Paris of to-day resulted in a general impression of improbability which verged at times on the ludicrous. The motive of the piece is revolt against the Conventions of Society, conventions which are fetters or manacles (*les menottes*) on freedom of individual action. It is undeniable that these fetters, whether necessary or not, vex and restrict everyone at times. But here the hero is a thoroughly wrongheaded Ibsenite young man, who insists on clapping handcuffs on himself at every opportunity, and then shakes them in the face of Society, who really would have let him alone if he would only be let alone. "Let me suffer," he cries with Mr. Jerome K. Jerome's delightful stage heroine—"I *do* so love to suffer!" And we suffer too as we listen to his ravings. His name is Débienne. He is a Secretary of State. He has two sisters who lead him a worse life than Cinderella ever endured from hers. They always appear together, and advise him all day long, and he is so much afraid of them, that it cannot but occur to the spectator that a little of the defiance he so freely hurls at Society would be well

bestowed and really useful in the bosom of the family. A well-known Parisian wit is reported to have christened the piece on its first night—"Oh! what will your sisters say?" (*et les sœurs?*) Our hero's valour consists in running away—with a lady whose husband has just run away from her. Morality forbids that we should approve Débienne entirely in this; yet we feel there is much excuse for him. His chief, fortunately, takes this indulgent view of the matter, and even goes so far as to shelter him by giving out that he has sent Débienne on a political mission, thus accounting for his absence. Surely any young secretary, even though he be a martyr, *à la* Ibsen, might be grateful to so accommodating and delightful a chief. So one would imagine; but the aggressive spirit of Débienne finds this indulgence an insult to his liberty. He cries out that it is a false excuse, that he needs no pretext as a shelter for his actions. He will run away with Mme. de Trielles if he deems fit, and he will tell everyone that he has run away with her. In vain does the chief expostulate with this exasperating secretary, in vain do his friends try to show him that no one wants to make a victim of him, that, indeed, no one cares very much whether he runs away with another man's wife or not, if he will but hold his tongue about it. He talks louder and louder, more and more, as the play proceeds. He announces that he will bring Mme. de Trielles home, under his sister's roof, &c., &c.! But this climax never comes—a new turn is given to everything by an anonymous letter full of accusations against the lady for whom he professed himself ready to die at the stake of Society prejudice. Here is the test of his wordy devotion, and here he fails. But the scene of his suspicion and jealous accusations is the best of the piece; he may be contemptible, but he is for once natural, and when he descends from his well-worn stilts we, for the first time, feel some sympathy for him. But Mme. de Trielles is a woman of decision; her pride is wounded mortally, and she bids him good-bye. So it all ends, and it only remains to give unqualified praise to M. Rameau and Mme. Legond-Weber, who were conspicuous for excellence in a cast admirable all round.

A French version of *Secret Service* has been given at the Renaissance, but without success. The interest of the piece is not strong enough for a Parisian audience, and the telegraphing scene was actually ridiculed. Among other new productions we must mention an adaptation by M. Charles Samson, of Bulwer-Lytton's *Richelieu* (Odéon). Our age is too critical and accurately informed to accept such a travesty of fairly well-known characters like Richelieu and Louis XIII. *Les Petites Folles*, by

Alfred Capus, at the Nouveautés, is a diverting little vaudeville in three acts, in which none of the problems of the day are exemplified, and only the good old moral that the vanities of the world are not worth the happiness of a quiet fireside is brought out in a series of good laughable scenes, full of sparkling dialogue and not wanting here and there in an irony which is none the less telling because good humour is bubbling round it. Mainly by reason of a bitterly cynical flavour, a new play at the Gymnase, *Les Trois Filles de la Dupont*, by M. Brieux, a young author, has met with good success.

IN BERLIN.

At the Berliner Theater two new plays have been seen within the past four weeks. The earlier was a three-act farce by Herren Wentzel and von Schlicht, *Tante Jette*, which, owing to its large military element and to the irresistible "Aunt Jette" herself—merry, good-natured, quick-witted, in short, irresistible—is received with a quite exceptional degree of favour. Fräulein Wenk made the best of the large possibilities contained in the title part. The later play was as sombre and heavy as its predecessor was light and amusing. As a sermon against socialism, *Das Hochste Gesetz* is powerful and impressive, but as the subject matter for an evening's entertainment is very depressing. One particular scene is enough in its icy horror to make the play an unpleasant remembrance to all who are so hardy as to sit it out. The author, with an amount of skill worthy of a better object, excites the intensest interest in the gradual culmination of a woman's agony to the point of her attempting suicide in a moment of frenzy. She is borne off, and presently, in a tone scarcely above a whisper, a doctor announces that if all remains quiet her life may yet be spared to her. The breath of the audience is held for a moment, for all feel instinctively what is going to happen. It comes. A murmur, growing louder and yet louder, is heard, and the next moment a handful of blatant, half-drunken socialists enter, who cannot or will not understand the necessity of silence. They quarrel; and in the midst of the uproar the woman, deathly pale, and entirely bereft of reason, enters. Her delirium is unspeakably harrowing, and her death at last sends through the spectator a chill sense of horror, not unmixed, however, with a certain sense of relief. As the unfortunate woman, Fräulein Popischil acted with all her wonted force, though, as may be imagined, she did nothing to lessen the strain on the audience's mind, but rather the reverse. Herr Pittschau gave a picture only too faithful of the mechanic-socialist.

Die Einzige, a three-act drama, produced at the Schauspiel-Haus, is the maiden effort of an extremely promising dramatic author, Herr Max Petzold. He tells an unaffectedly simple story of genuine pathos, poetic feeling, and naturalness, and only by an uncouth expression here and there could one guess that the writer lacked experience. The final scene of the play is, as an artistic conception, almost perfect. A girl is rallied by her sister on the score of her lover's prolonged absence, and it is maliciously suggested that his ardour has cooled. She is beginning to think so too, but at the very moment the doubt presents itself her lover comes in. He tells her that they may now be married at once, but she reminds him that she is the only support of her old father, and that if they are married her father must live with them. The old man, having become a defaulter in order to supply a favourite son with money, and her lover, consulting his dignity when he finds that she is firm, walks out. Then her father enters with the tidings that he has found a small situation, and draws fancy pictures of the happiness that he will now enjoy with the only one left to him of his ungrateful family. The curtain falls to his daughter's happiness in realising that she can make her father's few remaining years supremely happy. Fräulein Lindner and Herr Heine as the father and daughter ably rendered their rather exacting parts. Also, at the Schauspiel-Haus, *Waidwund*, a three-act drama, by Herr Skowronnek, has been produced. It is a play of the usual German pattern, the grand passion being overcome, in this case by the force of paternal affection. Herr Molenar in the central part gave the play a verisimilitude which was greatly needed, his best support coming from Fräulein Poppe as a woman slightly past her first youth and of unknown antecedents.

Madame Réjane has appeared at the Vaudeville in *Sappho* and Ibsen's *Nora*, in both of which she has won a recognition certainly far more cordial than a German actress of equal renown could obtain in Paris. Berlin people pride themselves upon their eclecticism, and have again shown it in a striking and pleasing way.

IN VIENNA.

Dalibor, a new opera in three acts by the Bohemian composer, Herr Friedrich Smetana, with a libretto by Herr Josef Wenzig, can scarcely be said to have been produced under the most favourable circumstances. Five years ago, when German-speaking Vienna rose to the pitch of enthusiasm over Bohemian works

played at the Exhibition Theatre, certain hopeful persons predicted, as the immediate result of this artistic triumph, a prompt reconciliation of the Czech and the German-speaking Austrians and the settlement of all their long-standing differences. Unfortunately, these enthusiasts overestimated the power of music as a factor in politics; and to-day the advocates of the rival languages are as bitterly opposed to one another as ever they were. The unquestionable success which *Dalibor* achieved at the Opera must, therefore, be regarded as a very high compliment to Herr Smetana's genius. The name given to the opera is that of the hero of the plot, who is brought before the king accused by Milada of the murder of her brother. Dalibor defends himself by asserting that the act was one of justifiable vengeance for the blood of Zdenko, a friend slain by Milada's brother. While the trial is in progress the girl is struck by the appearance and fearless attitude of the man whom she is accusing, and her original desire for vengeance for her brother's life is changed before the end is reached to feelings of admiration and affection. She is particularly impressed by Dalibor's declaration that he was in duty bound to kill the man who had murdered his friend, and when the king sentences Dalibor to life-long imprisonment, Milada suddenly becomes a pleader on his behalf. Her appeal being disregarded, she joins in a conspiracy of Dalibor's friends to effect his escape, but the conspiracy is discovered, and the king resolves to rid himself of all further trouble in the matter by having the prisoner executed. In the final scene, Milada and her companions, unaware of the discovery of their plan, lie in ambush around the tower in which Dalibor is confined, and await his signal. Instead of receiving the signal which they expected they are startled by the tolling of the execution bell. Milada at once places herself at the head of her band, storms the tower, and rescues the prisoner from the executioner's hand, but sinks back dead from wounds which she has received in the conflict. In the original form of the work, Dalibor then in despair surrenders himself to the executioner and his sentence is carried out; but, as produced here, the opera concludes with the death of Milada, Dalibor's fate being left undecided. The production was good in every detail, and Herr Winkelmann, who played the title-part; Frau Sedelmair, who, but for a slight indisposition, would have made a perfect Milada; Herr Hesch, the chief of the prison guard; and Herr Neidl, the king, contributed their best efforts towards a success effected in face of strong political prejudice.

Annas Traum, a new three-act drama by Herr Rudolf L'Arronge, proved disappointing to those who had looked

forward to its being up to its description as a *Volksstück*, or drama of the contemporary life of the working classes. Its heroine is almost impossible to conceive in real life, and the plot is a series of incongruities and improbable developments. *Der Stellvertreter*, a farce by MM. Busnach and Duval, translated into German by Herr Max Schönau, which was produced at the Carl Theater, belongs to the merriest and smartest pieces of its kind. Its kind, however, it is necessary to add, is the characteristically French one in which the *mènage à trois* forms the stock framework. The dish is the same, indeed, as has been brought to table for years past, but the sauce is very different. M. Ducloseau is much more a politician than a husband, and the Vicomte de Mouillière takes up in his household the position of "No. 3." The Vicomte's attitude towards Mme, Ducloseau is, to all outward appearances, of a platonic character; but, as a matter of fact, he is only maintaining that attitude because of the difficulty presented by the French law which forbids the guilty parties in a divorce to marry. Having made up his mind that Mme. Ducloseau shall be his wife, he has only the one method of procedure of persuading somebody else to undertake the part of compromising the lady. His friend Chantelaur raises very little objection to doing him this service, but so well does he act the lover that Mme. Ducloseau accepts him for himself, and the scheming Vicomte discovers that he holds no *locus standi* whatever in their arrangements for the future.

Another importation from the French stage which made its appearance at the Theater in der Josefstadt went equally well. It is a translation by Herr Otto Eisenschitz of MM. Mars and Devallièrs' daring vaudeville, *Japhet et ses Douzes Femmes*. Briefly put, the story involves the domestic complications of a Mormon who takes as his twelfth wife a woman who has already married two husbands, both of whom are living and come in search of her.

IN MADRID.

At the small theatre known as the Circo de Parish an effort is being made to refute the assertion which one often hears that the present-day taste for things of the lightest and most frivolous character has ruined the chances of the more solid dramas and *zarzuelas* which until recent years had always been the favourites of Madrid audiences. The venture appears, moreover, to be a great success. One of the works which have been recovered from an undeserved oblivion and put upon the stage of

this little theatre is *La Tempestad*, and with it a most promising opening to the new season was scored. The individual honours for the performance of the leading parts belong to Señores Berges, Navarro, and Soler, Señora Fabra, and Señorita Ruitort. Later in the month *La Tempestad* was replaced by *Marina*, Señor Arrieta's opera. It is interesting to note, as indicating in some measure the trend of public taste here, that an examination of the proposed programmes for the winter season shows that out of all the theatres of Madrid there are only two which promise anything more than the lightest of light farces. One of these theatres has already been mentioned. The other is the Princesa, which opened its winter performances under the best of auguries with a translation of Scribe and Legouvé's comedy *La Bataille des Dames*. This was followed by a new *sainete* by Señor Ceferino Palencia, which is entitled *Comediantes y Toreros ó La Vicariá*. It consists for the greater part of a mild caricature of life and customs in the early days of the century, and introduces several well-known personages of those times. On the whole, the little work has been very well put together, and nobody is likely to begrudge it the favour which it received from the audience.

IN NEW YORK.

The reappearance of Mr. E. S. Willard in New York would of itself constitute an important event, but when it is coupled with the American production of a new play by Mr. H. A. Jones public expectation reaches a high point. In following Mr. Charles Wyndham as the exponent of the principal character in *The Physician*, Mr. Willard challenges comparison with one of the most finished of English-speaking actors, and with the advantage of having both renderings in mind we can unhesitatingly say that Mr. Willard has not been happily inspired in undertaking it. He is best suited in a part where there is infinitely less of action and vigour, as in Professor Goodwillie, or in a part where there is infinitely more of it, such as in *The Rogue's Comedy*. But to those who have not seen the part as created in London the Dr. Lewin Carey of Mr. Willard will be all-sufficing, and, though the play has been much more severely criticised here than in London, both author and actor have reason to congratulate themselves on the result. Miss Maud Hoffman, as Edana, played with a grace that appealed to all; and Miss Keith Wakeman, as Lady Valerie, and Mr. Oswald Yorke, as the temperance-preaching drunkard, gave able if not convincing portrayals. At the Herald Square

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MRS. PATRICK CAMPBELL

AS "OPHELIA."

Theatre the successful London hotch-potch *The French Maid* has been given, and immediately found favour. Miss Marguerite Sylvia, Mr. Henry Norman, and Mr. George Honey are the principal players to whose efforts the enthusiastic reception of the medley was mainly due. Mr. Sol Smith Russell, after a prolonged absence, has now reappeared, finding in Miss Martha Morton's new play, *A Bachelor's Romance*, an excellent vehicle for the almost unique type of comedy of which he is the exponent. Miss Annie Russell ably supported him. A naval melodrama, *The Man-o'-War's-Man*, has found at the Grand Opera House a stage large enough for the display of its gigantic "effects," including a realistic presentment of a naval battle. Melodrama has always had a strong hold upon metropolitan audiences, and as the piece tells an effective story, and is well acted, it has in it all the elements of a real success. Musical comedy, though on the wane, is not in such a moribund state here as in England. *The Circus Girl* and *In Town* are still running at Daly's and the Knickerbocker respectively, while at the Casino *The Belle of New York*, on account of its lavish mounting and somewhat naughty plot, will probably hold its own for some weeks. A company of clever performers has been engaged, but they nearly all seemed to be uncomfortable in their particular parts. At Hoyt's an adaptation from the French entitled *The Proper Caper* has been markedly successful. Interesting to Englishmen will be the mention of Mr. George Bernard Shaw's three-act drama, *The Devil's Disciple*, produced by Mr. Richard Mansfield at the Fifth Avenue Theatre. It will, doubtless, surprise the many to learn that, in spite of Mr. Shaw's somewhat eccentric views and theories, he has written an eminently actable drama, excellently constructed upon those very "well-made play" principles which he was at one time wont to dispraise. The dialogue is bright, naturally; and Mr. Richard Mansfield is admirably suited in a strong character part. The scene of the story is America, and the time, when the Americans issued the historic Declaration. Mr. J. M. Barrie's long-expected dramatisation of his novel *The Little Minister* has at last seen the light at the Empire. It is not quite upon the lines of the tale, the variations being mostly in the last act. Miss Maude Adams, who sustains the burden of the play, was more than equal to her task, her delightful light comedy being of the utmost service in relieving the somewhat depressing atmosphere of the piece. Her principal supporter was Mr. Robert Edeson, who as Gavin Bishart acquitted himself excellently.

Echoes from the Green Room.

SIR HENRY IRVING'S visit to Cardiff was marked by a pleasing social incident. On September 23 he and Miss Ellen Terry were entertained at luncheon at the Royal Hotel, Mr. Lascelles Carr taking the chair. The company, numbering about one hundred, was eminently representative of that part of the Principality.

THE Rev. Canon Thompson proposed the toast in honour of the chief guests, to whose gifts he paid an eloquent and earnest tribute. The drama, he added, was the greatest of all works of creative literature. Socrates was glad to sit at the foot of Euripides, and to acknowledge the sovereignty of dramatic representation. What, then, was the position of the actor? He was the interpreter of the ideas of the dramatists to the popular intelligence of the popular heart. Sir Henry Irving was a great stage reformer, and had done much to dispel the old-fashioned prejudice--hardly to be understood—against the actor's art. No better example of the importance of hard and patient work could be supplied. The actor was a real and living force in the community, and in that light they all regarded Sir Henry Irving.

REPLYING to an address of welcome, in the course of which it was remarked that the people of Cardiff had heard with admiration of his triumphs in two hemispheres, Sir Henry said that the art of the stage was so dear that, to his mind, the man who did not care for the play was not so good a citizen as the good playgoer. To be born without the dramatic instinct he regarded as a calamity, such as colour blindness. He appreciated the compliment paid him that day, because it showed that in Cardiff, one of the greatest commercial centres of the kingdom, they were alive to the æsthetic influence of a good theatre. This was consoling to an actor whose spirits had been somewhat dashed by a recent attempt in another great commercial centre to arouse the moral sense of the community against the corrupting influence of the stage. "At the Sanitary Congress in Leeds last week it was gravely urged by a medical gentleman—it is astonishing how grave these gentlemen are when they have anything to say against the theatre—it was gravely urged by a medical gentleman, who perceives an intimate relation between sanitation and the drama, that many crimes have originally been prompted by the pictorial advertisements of violence on the stage. If, for instance, you should notice on a hoarding the figure of an Alsatian burgomaster flourishing an Alsatian axe, you might have a certain impulse, according to this gentleman at Leeds, to rush home and apply an axe to the inoffensive members of your family. The

case, I imagine, must be a little worse when you see Othello murdering poor Desdemona. If I were present at a Sanitary Congress, I should be disposed to ask how many innocent wives have owed a violent death to the pernicious example of Shakspere. In spite of this very serious indictment, I am very proud to find that you hold fast to the idea that the theatre plays no unworthy part in the lives of the people; that it is the greatest glory of our dramatic literature; that it is the most broadly humanising influence in the world. Sympathy, tolerance, serene and sustaining wisdom are preached in the plays of Shakspere as they have never been preached anywhere else. It was a wise man who said that the professional moralist was moral by the strength of his antipathies, but that Shakspere was moral by the strength of his sympathy, and the poet himself has put this gospel of humanity into words which bear the stamp of immortal truth—'The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together.' Remember, you who declaim against the stage, that your lives are good and ill together. Our virtues would be found if our faults were hidden, and our vices would despair if they were not cherished by our virtues. That is the profound, the intensely human lesson which is taught by the drama, even in its humblest endeavours. And how dare any human beings stand up to speak against this great work of God Himself?"

Miss Terry, in response to an address, made a short graceful speech, in which she expressed a wish to appear professionally in Cardiff before long.

Interviewed at Cardiff, Sir Henry said that, from what he had heard, Mr. Forbes Robertson's Hamlet was an epoch-making performance. As to the relations between the Church and the Stage, he did not think they were worth discussion. "I am devoted to my work, and will, with all the ability and consciousness in my power, work for the benefit of my fellow-creatures, and I endeavour to use as worthily as I can such gifts as God Almighty has endowed me with. But, really, it is a pity that these people should talk as they do, especially as they do not act up to all they preach. I fear that even the churches are not infallible yet. If they want to go about pulpit drumming against us we cannot prevent them. At the same time, I have found that the best men of the churches regarded the stage in a good light. There was the late Archbishop Tait, who was a great and good man. He came to see us, and I have played and read *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* in the company of Archbishop Tait, Bishop Ellicott, and others. No large hearted man runs down the stage. Even Martin Luther had a very high regard for the theatre." "Do you think the stage will ever receive State recognition, say, as it does in France?" "I think the municipalities will do something in time. Ultimately, the stage shall be more fully recognised as a great benefit, and as giving pure, wholesome recreation in the performance of substantial plays—as they do in intelligent European countries. No doubt there will be great opposition. The opening of museums, picture galleries, &c., on the Sabbath was opposed, but people are beginning to realise that there is nothing very dreadful in looking at a beautiful picture on the day of rest. The terrible things that one realises when going through the country, especially in the smaller places, is the awful lack of proper recreation, lack of innocent amusement, lack of anything upon which the people may feed the imagination. The result is that we have far too much of the sodden, heavy, almost brutal, stupidity and carelessness." "They give some assistance in France. Three or four theatres in Paris, I think ——?" "Yes, and in

Germany as well. In Germany they have two systems—the Stadt and the Hoff. One is aided by the State and the other by the municipalities. The great advantage of a theatre is that it provides a resort for those who desire intelligent recreation—such as the theatre proper is supposed to provide—and the privilege of witnessing much entertainment. A part of the education of the children in Germany is given through the drama. Here, in England, we find the municipalities providing music and other amusements for the people. They do so in Edinburgh and elsewhere. The theatre is an enormous force for good or for evil, and the Church ought to realise it and be careful lest they find that they have made a grievous error. But see how we assist the great Church and other charities! My old friend Bancroft has contributed quite £4000 recently by his readings and so on. Not long ago I gave a reading at Canterbury on behalf of the restoration of the Cathedral, and sent them over £200. We gave a performance at the Lyceum on behalf of the Jubilee Nurses' Fund, and I sent in a cheque for something like £1000. We also sent a cheque for £1000 from the Lyceum to the funds of the Royal College of Music, which the Prince of Wales has built up so much by his own efforts. In fact, the stage is the most charitable of all the professions. The actor is always the first to be called upon if he is within reach, when help is wanted."

Mr. Gilbert, apparently, is in no amiable mood. Has the effect of his latest essay in serious drama, *The Fortune Hunter*, failed to realise his expectations? Interviewed lately at Edinburgh, where that piece was being represented, he hit out, we are told, with characteristic vigour. "The fact is," he is reported to have said, "managers cannot judge a play when they see it in manuscript. If Pinero writes a play and sends it to Sir Henry Irving it is accepted, not because it is a good play, but because it is by Pinero. If a stranger, who may be a clever dramatist, sends Sir Henry, or Mr. Tree, or anybody else a play, it is not accepted, however good it may be, because they can't judge. Your manager nowadays crosses to France, sees a play that goes well, and how it can be slightly watered down to suit our censorious society, and immediately transplants it. The French stage has good actors and atrociously bad plays. Their plays are much more analytical than ours, written for the most part in a quasi-Thackerayian manner. Sardou's plays elaborate character to such an extent that they might be pages out of Thackeray turned into French. Their actors, of course, can so speak and deliver speeches as to chain the attention of the audience, while ours, why, we have no actor who can make a thirty-line speech interesting! Who ever heard in this country 'all the world's a stage' declaimed by a Jacues who did not in every line make it plain that he had learned it off by heart? There is always the same dull monotony of delivery. Every living actor—Sir Henry Irving, Beerbohm Tree, Alexander, excellent though they may be otherwise—have that dull monotony of delivery. They keep to one note right through the sentence, and finish a semi-tone higher or a semi-tone lower, as the case may be."

Now comes a melancholy announcement from Mr. Gilbert. He is disgusted with the critics. "I will write no more plays. I mean to retire now. I am disheartened by the erroneous point of view from which criticisms are written in London. They never seem to dissociate the play from the author of the play. I am not complaining of bad criticisms. I have had plenty, and have learned much from them. But there is such a tendency to look upon the author of a bad or an unsuccessful play, not as

a poor devil who has tried his best, but as a man who has committed an outrage against nature. The critics attack him as if he were a scoundrel of the worst type, and they go on at it week after week. I don't feel disposed to put myself forward as a cockshy for these gentlemen. I think it better to refrain from writing, as I am not obliged to write. I prefer to work in a different groove, where anything I may do will stand upon its own merits."

Sir Henry Irving was not slow to resent the attack made upon him by Mr. Gilbert. Speaking as the guest of the Sheffield and District Press Club at a supper held after the performance of *Madame Sans-Gêne* on October 20, he touched on the question of newspaper criticism. Wherever he had been he had experienced the most kindly evidence of the power and sympathy of the Press. He had been arraigned as fellow-criminal with themselves in the melancholy charges made by a gentleman who possessed a very just and enviable reputation as a comic-opera librettist. This gentlemen had seen fit, in a recent interview in a newspaper, to see nothing but unworthiness in Press critics, actors, and public—in all except dramatists. But laying aside his lyre, this critic had chosen to dare the heights of the serious drama—with what success he greatly feared was shown by his very childish statements and his very jaundiced behaviour. He seemed to be in the position of the proverbial bull, which, instead of getting in a china shop, had found itself in an ironmongery establishment and hurt nobody but itself. So long as he had the support of the earnest thinkers and of the great public—who, after all, were the arbiters of all their destinies—he should continue to travel on his road, even though he might not be able to accept plays upon their merits, or perhaps even to read one, or speak consecutively thirty lines of blank verse.

Mme. Patti, long in ill-health, is now confined to her bed in Paris, where she arrived last month.

Mr. Forbes Robertson is doing well with his poetic and refined, if not exactly great, performance of Hamlet at the Lyceum. In all probability, he will not find it necessary to change his programme during his brief tenancy of that theatre. By the way, he has wisely restored the speech, omitted on the first night, "Now might I do it pat."

The brothers de Reszke, who have withdrawn from their winter engagements, remain on their Polish estate, the former studying Siegfried in the *Gotterdummerung*, and the latter Hagen. They will not reappear until March.

Mr. L. N. Parker is dramatising *Le Chemineau* for Mr. Tree, and will lay the scene in Dorsetshire.

Mr. Wilson Barrett brought his season at the Lyric to a close last month, and will shortly set out for his tour in Australia. Contrary to expectation, he will be joined there by Miss Maud Jeffries, who is now in America.

In consequence of previous arrangements, *A Marriage of Convenience*, though still successful, will shortly give place at the Haymarket to Mr. Barrie's adaptation of his own story, *The Little Minister*.

The energetic Colonel Mapleson is full of a scheme for establishing an opéra comique at the Olympic Theatre. His idea is to present all the lighter operas in the best possible style, at popular prices, and the season is to last ten months each year.

The *Grand Duchess*, altered by Mr. Charles Brookfield, is to be revived at

the Savoy, Miss Florence St. John being the heroine. "The sabre of my sire" is to be omitted.

Mme. Eames, we hear, has decided to accompany M. Jean and M. Edouard de Reszke to Russia next spring, to take part in a series of Wagner performances at St. Petersburg, afterwards going to Moscow, Warsaw, and other cities. Probably she will sing Senta in the *Flying Dutchman*.

Mr. Willard is staying at the Players' Club, New York, during his visit to that city.

Mme. Nordica has arrived in New York from Europe.

Miss Rehan and Mr. Daly were recently entertained at Newstead Abbey by Colonel Webb, and at Welbeck Abbey by the Duke and Duchess of Portland.

According to an interviewer, Lord Tennyson was once asked by Sir Henry Irving to make King Arthur the subject of a play, but declined on the ground that he had finished with it in the *Idylls of the King*. "Why not Dante?" asked Sir Henry. "Yes," was the reply; "fine theme, Dante; but where is the Dante to deal with it?" Here it is, however, that Mr. Alfred Calmour comes in.

The White Heather seems likely to give rise to controversy, if not to litigation. The executors of Sir Augustus Harris hold that he had a share in the invention of the play, and Mr. Cecil Raleigh and Mr. Henry Hamilton, who are announced as its authors, pointedly deny the allegation.

During the first rehearsals of *The Liars*, it seems, much commotion was caused at the Criterion by the appearance in an enterprising daily contemporary of the plot of that comedy. Possibly the irrepressible interviewer had been a little more active than usual. Rightly enough, Mr. Jones and Mr. Wyndham had something to say upon the point, contending that the plot of a piece is to be regarded as private property until after the production of the Piece.

The *Princess and the Butterfly* seems to have puzzled a section of the audience at Glasgow during Mr. Alexander's recent visit to that city. "What is it all about?" a local critic despairingly asked between the acts. "You must go through a special training in this sort of thing," he was told in reply; "human heads are variable in thickness."

Mme. de Navarro (Mary Anderson) has gone to Paris, where she will study singing during the winter, but with no intent, as she has assured an interviewer, to appear as a professional vocalist.

Mr. William Winter, after a short holiday in this country, returned to New York last month. Always fond of superlatives, he describes Edinburgh as the most beautiful city he has ever seen. "You are the finest Iago I have ever played to," Edmund Keen once remarked to a young actor. The latter smiled. "Why do you smile?" he was asked. "Because," he replied, "I know half a dozen Iagos to whom you have said the same thing."

The death is announced of Mr. Langtry, formerly the husband of Mrs. Langtry. He had been found in a dazed condition at Crewe station, and had been taken to the Chester Lunatic Asylum. His wife, who obtained a divorce from him a few months ago, and who, according to a Dalziel telegram from San Francisco, is about to marry Prince Esterhazy, was represented at the funeral by a wreath inscribed "In remembrance." For

some time she had made him a regular allowance. He began life in the diplomatic service, and married her in 1875.

Mr. Alfred Caldicott, the composer of so many operettas for the departed German Reed entertainment, besides other musical works, died lately at Worcester in his fifty-fifth year. He was principal of the London College of Music.

Good news for scholars. From Geneva we learn that nothing less than a considerable portion of a play by Menander has been brought to light. It is among the papyri brought from Cairo by M. Jules Nicole. According to a correspondent of the *Standard*, the authorship is placed beyond all possible doubt by passages which have been quoted by ancient writers as coming from one of Menander's plays.

M. Jon Stefanasson calls attention to an innovation in the closet scene of *Hamlet*, as now acted at the Lyceum. "It consists in having full-length portraits of Hamlet's father and of Claudius on the walls of the Queen s closet instead of carrying about miniature portraits or medallions. This was the rule in the eighteenth century. It was done by Garrick, and in our times by Rossi, Edwin Booth, and Mr. Beerbohm Tree in acting *Hamlet*. Irving and Salvini, however, treat the portraits as figments of the imagination. In the *Contemporary Review*, January, 1896, I showed that the various modes of presenting these portraits did not agree with Shakspere's words about them in the play. They leave no doubt that the portraits are not miniatures. I further showed that Shakspere probably had in his mind the splendid Renaissance Chamber in Elsinore Castle (Kronborg), with a series of full-length portraits of Danish Kings woven into the tapestry on its walls (cp. the arras of the Queen's closet). This famous room is described with admiration by Shakspere's contemporaries in English. His friends and fellow-actors, Kemp, Pope, and Bryan, had acted in Elsinore Castle before the Danish Court in 1586. It is even possible that young Shakspere, then unknown and just of age, was with them, for the young actors of the company are evidently not named in the Danish records. However that may be, Shakspere had clearly knowledge of this room, and read in the light of that knowledge his words about the full-length portraits in the arras become pregnant and full of meaning.

On the subject of "The Stage and Longevity," an actuary writes to us:—"A perusal of Mr. Austin Brereton's article reminds one of the old saying that one can prove anything by statistics, but on reflection it will, I think, be admitted that Mr. Brereton proves nothing beyond the fact that it is possible for an actor to attain as great an age as the members of any other profession. There are few things so misleading as statistics when based on a paucity of facts, and any inference drawn from Mr. Brereton's interesting list of long-lived actors would be quite untrustworthy. A similar list could, I make no doubt, be readily prepared for every profession or calling, even for military men.

"Now, it is obvious that, in comparing the mortality experienced by any particular body of men with that of the general population, regard must be had to the ages of entry as well as those of exit. The average age of recruits to the profession might be taken as twenty-five, or possibly even less, but the average age at which Mr. Brereton's 'Two hundred of the most noted actors of the past' became famous cannot be assumed to be less than thirty-five. This would almost follow from a remark of Mr. Brereton's

that 'the famous actors who have died at a comparatively early age are few and far between.'

"On referring to a table of mortality I see that of two hundred people living at age thirty-five, thirty-one, or less than one-seventh, die before the attainment of age fifty, and that the number of the survivors is not reduced to fifty until age seventy-six has been passed. Compare this with the rather vague details given by Mr. Brereton, and the mortality in each case appears practically identical. Where, then, is the superior vitality of the actor?

"Apparently none of the two hundred noted actors died before the age of forty, which fact would warrant the assumption of an average age of forty at entry.

"The normal mortality amongst two hundred people aged forty is as follows: Twenty-three, or rather more than one-ninth, die before the attainment of age fifty, and the number of the survivors is reduced to fifty at age seventy-seven. Another point to which I would draw attention is the probability that successful or famous actors would experience a more favourable mortality than the rank and file of the profession."

THE Elizabethan Stage Society, now about to enter upon its third season, announces revivals of Ford's tragedy *The Broken Heart*, also of Middleton and Rowley's *Spanish Gipsy*. There will be revived, besides, a comedy by Beaumont and Fletcher, and Ben Jonson's fragment, *The Sad Shepherd*. The first performance of the season will be given on Tuesday evening, November 2, at the Mansion House, the play chosen being *The Tempest*. Such an announcement as the last is enough to make many City Fathers of old move uneasily in their graves.

MME. BERNHARDT, after a most successful tour abroad, has returned to Paris, and will shortly reappear at the Renaissance in M.M. Maurice Donnay's *L'Affranchie*.

La Vie de Bohème continues to attract large crowds to the House of Molière.

IN a revival at the Comédie Française of *L'Etrangère*, M. Le Bargy has won a distinct success as the Duke, a part so long identified with M. Coquelin the elder.

M. MOUNET-SULLY thinks of retiring from the stage, and has built for himself a beautiful house in the south of France.

M. MEURICE'S *Struensée* will not be seen at the Comédie Française until the beginning of the season of 1898-9.

MLLE. REICHENBERG'S engagement at the Comédie Française, after being extended for a month in order that she might re-appear in her principal parts, will expire in December.

MME. REJANE'S tour is to be on a larger scale than she originally intended. She goes to Berlin, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa, Bucharest, Vienna, Strasburg, and Munich, reappearing at the Paris Vaudeville towards the close of the year. Her chief play will be *Mme. Sans-Gêne*.

M. SARDOU is preparing a *Paméla* for Mme. Réjane. This will not be the first time that Richardson's novel has been adapted to the French stage in one form or another. Two such pieces were produced in Paris about a century and a half ago, one by Boissy, at the Théâtre Italien, the other by Lachausée at the Théâtre Français. "Is *Paméla* a success?" asked someone in a cafe after the first representation of the latter. "Non," replied an incorrigible punster; "elle pâme, hélas."

M. Dupont-Vernon, of the Comédie Française, which he joined a little more than twenty-two years ago, died last month at the age of fifty-four. In him the French stage loses a valuable actor. He was professor of declamation at the Conservatoire.

The revival of Bulwer Lytton's *Richelieu* in Paris has naturally revived memories of its original performance, and also, of course, of Sir Henry Irving's superb impersonation at the Lyceum of the Cardinal. "I remember," the *Daily News* correspondent writes, "hearing a great friend of Macready say that the actor who was not killed by personating Richelieu must have lungs of the toughest indiarubber. Macready told him one afternoon at the Garrick Club that he had endless trouble with his by-play. This was not merely to prevent the audience from wishing him to skip, but to keep his lungs well filled with air. He drew breath long and deep at full stops, but concealed that fact by some unexpected gesture or change of expression or effect of by-play. Lord Lytton, the Ambassador, told me the same thing, and the care Macready took to inflate his lungs was the secret of his ease and constant good health. His chest and nostrils, said Lord Lytton, took a peculiar development. The deep-drawn breathing became a second nature. His voice acquired the fulness of a fine organ, and he used to leave the theatre after his strenuous part without a sign of fatigue." Macready lived to a good old age ; and yet, in spite of such physical exercise, we are told, as Mr. Austin Brereton pointed out in these pages last month, that in the opinion of some persons the occupation of the player is essentially unhealthy.

The Menus Plaisirs has been renamed after its present manager, M. Antoine, who has revived *Blanchette* there.

M. Chivot, part author, with Alfred Durer, of several opéra-bouffes, including *Fleur de Thé*, *Les Cent Vierges*, *Les Braconniers*, *Madame Favart*, *La Fille du Tambour Major*, *La Mascotte*, *Le Grand Mogul*, *La Cigale et La Fourmi*, and other well-known pieces, some of which were set to music either by Offenbach, Lecocq, or Hervé, died lately from disease of the heart, at the age of forty-seven. He was the sole author of *Les Locataires du Monsieur Blondeau*.

The old story of Frederick the Great and the miller of San-Souci has been repeated in another form. The Censor at Frankfort lately prohibited the production at the municipal theatre there of a drama called *The Bargrave*, on the ground that a Hohenzollern appeared in it. Funnily enough, the present Emperor William had, unknown to anybody but the other author, helped to write the play, designed the scenery, and otherwise shown a great interest in the work. The censor has not yet recovered the shock attending the discovery of the truth ; but the latest reports as to his health, we are glad to say, are of a somewhat reassuring nature. A report that he has mysteriously disappeared, or taken refuge in another land, is wholly without foundation.

One of the most recent additions to the Donizetti Museum at Bergamo is the original manuscript of *Linda di Chamounix*, with, on the front page, in the composer's own handwriting, the dedication to the Empress of Austria.

Signor Verdi was prevented by the infirmities of age from being present at the recent celebration at Bergamo. This he keenly regretted, as Donizetti was one of the first to recognise his genius. "Verdi," wrote the composer of *Lucia di Lammermoor* in 1845, "will go far, and that rapidly.

You will see!" Signor Verdi at that time had written only *Nabucco*, *Ernani*, and *I Lombardi*.

Italy is arousing herself to a sense of the importance of the English drama as it is to-day. She is to have translations of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, *The Sign of the Cross*, *The Daughters of Babylon*, *The Magistrate*, *Charley's Aunt*, *Niöbe*, and *Pygmalion and Galatea*.

It is not generally known that in early life Mazzini wrote two long-lost plays, *Alexandre de Medicis* and *Anna*, the first being of historical and the other of social interest. The brothers Ruffini, his companions in exile, frequently spoke of these pieces in letters written in 1835. There is a rumour in Italy that the manuscript of *Alexandre de Medicis* has been discovered.

Mr. Jefferson, after a holiday at his summer home at Buzzard's Bay, Mass., last month started upon another tour, beginning at Portland, Maine.

Mr. Charles Coghlan has been engaged by F. C. Whitney to play the leading role in Mr. Theodore Kremer's new comedy-drama, which will be known as *In Old Vienna* or as *Bells Out of Tune*.

Mr. Wilton Lackage, so famous as Svengali, was to begin a tour at Philadelphia on October 11 in his new romantic play, *The Royal Secret*.

At the age of eighty-one, Mr. Joseph Proctor, formerly one of the most popular Shaksperean actors on the American stage, has just passed away. He frequently played Othello to the Iago of Junius Brutus Booth, and Iago to the Othello of Edwin Booth. Many years ago he went on a tour in England, and at Glasgow had the support of Mr. Henry Irving as Macduff, De Mauprat, and Cassio.

Mr. Daly is preparing a revival of *The Merchant of Venice*, with Miss Rehan, of course, as Portia.

Sir Henry Irving has had a chair of Instruction in Dramatic Training endowed in his honour in the School of Expression, Boston.

Mr. J. E. Dodson's astonishing "flexibility of adaptation" on the stage is well illustrated in the New York *Mail and Express*, which gives eight portraits of him in character. It is difficult to realise the fact that all are of the same actor. Better examples of "making up" have seldom been seen.

It has been solemnly contended that personal journalism is not carried to excess. Yet the *New York Herald* recently gave a column to the stirring news that M. Paderewski had had his immense crop of hair cut quite short.

THE THEATRE.

DECEMBER, 1897.

Our Watch Tower.

THE FUTURE OF COMIC OPERA.

THERE can be no doubt that we are in the midst of a revival of comic opera of the old-fashioned and legitimate sort. In a sense, comic opera has never been wholly dead among us. It has always lingered, if it has not always flourished of late years, at the Savoy. It is not so long since a very successful run of *The Mikado* came to an end at Mr. Carte's theatre, and since then *The Yeomen of the Guard* has once more drawn audiences to its old habitat.

Comic opera, there is reason to believe, would never disappear entirely from the bills of the London playhouses. On the other hand, it has certainly been put into the shade, for a decade or so, by that mongrel artistic form called the "musical farce" or "comedy with music." Now, at last, there seems to be a prospect of better things. *The Geisha* still maintains its merry career, and the Gaiety is never without a "girl" who can be relied upon to be magnetic in her influence on the public; but there are signs that the *genre*, as a *genre*, is getting into disfavour. In its best shape it survives and is prosperous; but the less excellent examples have been so numerous as, we believe, to sicken at length the very large public to which they appealed. Side by side with this growing distaste we have had a renascent affection for comic opera of the once well-known pattern. It occurred to the management of the Prince of Wales's Theatre to transplant from Paris the then latest work of Edmond

Audran, *La Poupée*. Its success was instantaneous—prepared for, no doubt, by that of *Miss Decima* and *Ma Mie Rosette*, but certainly unmistakable. Whether the triumph of *La Poupée* conveyed inspiration to other managements, we cannot say; but the fact remains that the production of that piece has been quickly followed by the revival at three several establishments of *La Périchole*, *La Petite Mariée*, and *La Grande Duchesse*. Moreover, other revivals of the kind are threatened, and it will be interesting to note what will be the eventual outcome of the movement.

We may say at once that we do not think the demand for revived works of the old *opéra-bouffe* order will be lasting. The music of such pieces as *La Grande Duchesse*, *La Petite Mariée*, and *La Périchole* must always be attractive, but not so their plots and characters. These latter are rococo nowadays —played out. Men who are now middle-aged used, in their young days, to laugh at the extravagances of *Madame Angot*, *Généviève de Brabant*, *Barbe Bleue*, and so forth; but could they do so now, or could their juniors? Can one conceive the "gens-d'armes" duet having, in these times, the vogue which it had in the seventies? Could any fun be got now out of the Burgomasters and Bailies who were wont once to set audiences in a roar? We had *Madame Angot* at the Criterion not so very long ago, but it appeared to have lost all its former *bouquet*. *La Périchole* has done very well, we believe, at the Garrick; but it has triumphed, we fancy, in spite of its antiquated story, having the advantage of an admirable setting and interpretation. In the case of *La Petite Mariée* (*The Scarlet Feather*), the original intrigue has been modified almost beyond recognition; while in that of *La Grande Duchesse*, brought out at the Savoy just as this issue of *The Theatre* goes to press, it is understood that the "book" has been entirely rewritten. We shall see what comes of this last-named innovation; but we shall be surprised if it imparts any real freshness to the story of the Grand Duchess's infatuation for the private soldier. General Boom and Baron Grog, we presume, will still be there.

Managers and authors may do their best to put new wine into the old bottles; but will they succeed in achieving the process? Adaptation is apt to result in dulness; take out of these opera-bouffe stories their suggestiveness, their breadth, and what is left? Sheer nonsense, too often. The British public wants, in comic opera, a story; but that story must have some brightness, some humour, and these qualities are apt to vanish before the work of

expurgation has been done. We take it, therefore, that comic opera, if it is to prosper in England in the future, must be no mere *rechauffé* of old matter, however famous that matter may have been. The world progresses. Each generation must be amused in its own way. Playgoers are ready once more to welcome comic opera, but it must be of a sort freshly minted. Even about the pretty and piquant *La Poupée* there is a kind of atmosphere reminiscent of the past. Still, if French work of this *genre* is to be really popular again among us, it is by such pieces as *La Poupée*—or something better—that its popularity will be secured. There must be not only novelty, but consistency. The time has gone by for easy and unblushing anachronisms. We doubt if the public would now tolerate, in a comic opera of the better class, the "topical" duet which used to obtain so many encores. To the "musical farce" or the "comedy with music" anything and everything may be permitted; they are extravaganzas, and nothing more. But from comic opera something more will be required—a clear, pretty, conceivable story, illustrated legitimately by song and dance—free alike from convention, from dreariness, and from vulgarity.

For work of this class it is not at all necessary to look exclusively to France, or to America, at all. If *The Wizard of the Nile*, for example, is a fair representative of American comic opera, then, we think, there is no room for that product over here. On the other hand, any really good effort of this *genre* would be as welcome from the States as from any other quarter. But we do not see why we should not ourselves supply our own market. Why should not Mr. Pinero write operatic librettos? Mr. Sydney Grundy has done so, and will no doubt do so again. Sir Arthur Sullivan is happily still with us, ready and willing to adorn any attractive theme with delightful music. Why should not the producers of the best musical farce themselves help to furnish comic opera of the legitimate kind? Mr. Ivan Caryll, Mr. Walter Slaughter, Mr. Sidney Jones—these and others in our midst are quite competent to do what is wanted musically. We are not without hope, indeed, that the obvious trend of the public taste will lead managers to entrust English writers and composers with commissions for comic opera on the best models. There are plenty of competent singers and actors—singers and actors who have scarcely a chance in "musical farce" of showing the ability they possess. Let the demand arise, and the supply will be forthcoming. Our *entrepreneurs* should take their courage in both hands, and set out at once to fulfil the unmistakable desires of the lovers of melody and humour.

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Portraits.

MRS. BROWN POTTER.

THERE are, of course, many players whose reputation and the fame of whose achievements reach to all parts of the civilised globe. But it is, in ordinary cases, only by report that they are known. Mrs. Brown Potter, however, enjoys an almost world-wide reputation, based upon actual performances in each of the four quarters of the earth. In Europe, Asia, Africa, and America she has given pleasure to her audiences; and brought back recollections of old days at home to many a son of the Empire in far-distant lands, among alien and often hostile races. American by birth (coming of an old Southern family), Mrs. Brown Potter yet made her first professional appearance in London. Eleven years ago, at the Haymarket Theatre, then under the management of Messrs. Russell and Bashford, she played Anne Sylvester in *Man and Wife*. It was almost as much a fashionable event as the *début* of Mrs. Langtry had been some years before, for Society is always interested (for the moment at any rate) when one of its members crosses the bridge leading from *le monde où l'on s'amuse* to that other world which devotes itself to providing amusement for others. The experiment was successful enough to afford encouragement to persevere, and after various other appearances, including those in *Civil War* and in "Ross Neil's" *Loyal Love*, Mrs. Brown Potter decided to gain experience on an Australian tour. In this venture she was first associated with Mr. Kyrle Bellew, who has since been her companion "star" on her extended travels. Afterwards India, China, and Japan were visited, and London saw nothing of the travellers (though from time to time came news of their successes) until 1891, when they made a short stay in town, appearing in *Romeo and Juliet*, and a few other pieces. Then they were off again. The wandering spirit once born into the breast and given its way cannot be stilled, and Mrs. Brown Potter and Mr. Bellew, shortly to be on their way again after their recent visit with *Francillon*, are likely to be travellers until the end of the chapter. They have had rough times as well as smooth—being burnt out at Cape Town in 1892 and losing all their wardrobe was one of the incidents to which they do not look back with pleasure—but "taking the rough with the smooth of it" Mrs. Potter has found a roving life much to her taste, while lovers of the drama in all parts of the world have found her performances in her sterling répertoire very much to theirs.

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MRS. BROWN POTTER.

The Round Table.

ACTOR AND CRITIC.

By Walter Herries Pollock.

A WHIMSICAL person, imagining himself engaged on a list of definitions of things of and belonging to the stage, proposed to set down under the headings *Actor* and *Critic*—"Actor, a person depending on a Critic"—"Critic, a person depending on an Actor;" and there is something, no doubt, of fact in so fantastical a quip. It is quite open, of course, to the actor to say: "This is all very well by way of a passing jest, but pray how do you make out any truth in it? For, to be sure, I can act with never a professed critic to see me, but how the deuce are you to criticise an empty stage?" The critic would, of course, reply that this was frequently his painful duty, and so might they go on from the retort courteous to the countercheck quarrelsome, whereas they ought to end in agreeing that while in accordance with strict fact the actor could go on acting if a universal muzzling order against critics were issued, yet in practice the two callings of actor and dramatic critic are, or at any rate ought to be, interdependent. The business of both is to understand in all his breadth and all his delicacy the poet whom it is the actor's special duty to interpret to his audiences, just as it is the critic's special duty to point out to the public wherein, according to him, the actor has excelled or fallen short. It is surely just this "according to *him*" which is the only or chief begetter of bitterness between actor and critic.

For, consider, though the actor, in that mentioned strictness of fact which is but a synonym for theory, can get on without the critic, one may ask for how long he would like the experiment, were it once tried, to continue. Put the actor at the height of the vainest actor's estimation, and the critic in the humblest position which editorial judgment may, in a press of other business, assign to him, and yet the critic does that for the actor which no amount of mere talk between people who have seen a given performance and people who may or may not have made up their minds to see it can as fully accomplish. Every man in these

days has his newspaper as much as he has his price, and if his special newspaper tells him that, in spite of such and such shortcomings, he ought to see Mr. Z. in a new or old play, he is tolerably certain to obey the behest. It is true, *per contra*, that if he has made up his mind to see the performance before he reads his newspaper he will go, even if the newspaper warns him against it. But this is a case unlikely to occur save in regard to actors of mark. There are three possible grievances which the actor may have against a critic. A critic may be incompetent, or spiteful, or both. In either case, he is tolerably sure to be found out by the public, and can be disregarded by an actor who has made any way with the public. There is a fourth possibility, that of a competent and spiteful critic deliberately hampering the progress of a gifted and industrious actor who has his way yet to make. But does this happen often enough to make it a consideration of serious weight in any argument on the general relations of actor and critic? I think decidedly not, in Great Britain. As for the critic's grievances against the actor, they resolve themselves into this, that he may be compelled to pass an afternoon or evening of boredom, or worse than boredom. Well, he is paid to do so, just as the actor is paid to amuse or thrill the public; and he might well reflect on this, that while the actor cannot wring his withers seriously, he can either justly or unjustly wring the actor's, and in this respect at least has the actor at a disadvantage.

There are of course compensations on the actor's side. The critic, were he Addison, Lamb, and Hazlitt rolled into one, can never gain such peculiar triumphs by first-rate criticism as the actor can win by first-rate acting. Not for the critic the dazzling glory of the moment when the actor feels that he has made a vast crowd's heart beat responsive to his utterance of the poet's words, not for him the shout of the enraptured multitude, nor for him, the actor may add, the misery of expressed disapproval, or of the cold condemnation that silence may carry with it. The critic's works may, to be sure, live after him, and, here is the very tie that knits critic and actor together, may in that after-life convey not only the actor's fame, but the very form and pressure of his acting to generations unborn when the critic wrote. This is the one great thing that, until a perfection of united pictures and sounds preserved for posterity enables posterity to hear and see dead actors for themselves, the critic can do for the actor. And where, the critic may ask, do we find aught to match this in what the actor can do, or at any rate as a rule does, for the critic? The diaries of past actors do not

bristle with tributes to the insight of critics. Let us, however, assume that critics and actors ought to be, and very often are, filled with a sense of mutual responsibility, and are agreed that the duty of each is with the help of the other well and truly to serve the public by leading them more and more to the appreciation of what is best and noblest in art.

Well, the actor's duty in this ideal state of things is simply expressed. It is to come as near greatness in acting as he can, and, with regard to the critic, to refrain from thinking it impossible that there may be some value in that poor creature the critic's suggestions. The critic's duties cannot be so easily summed up, and one may attempt to consider briefly what in the main they should be. To which purpose it may be not amiss to consult the wisdom of the ancients. And it appears to me that what Addison says (*Spectator* No. 291) of criticism in general is peculiarly fit for the consideration of critics of plays and players: "A true critic ought to dwell rather upon excellencies than imperfections, to discover the concealed beauties of a writer, and communicate to the world such things as are worth their observation. . . . Tully observes that it is very easy to brand or fix a mark upon what he calls *verbum ardens* . . . and to turn it into ridicule by a cold, ill-natured criticism. A little wit is equally capable of exposing a beauty and of aggravating a fault; and though such a treatment of an author [or, we may add, actor] naturally produces indignation in the mind of an understanding reader, it has, however, its effect among the generality of those whose hands it falls into, the rabble of mankind being very apt to think that every thing which is laughed at, with any mixture of wit, is ridiculous." Here Addison exactly points to what we most of us know is the besetting temptation of young critics. It is so much easier to make smart "copy" out of fault-finding with surface blemishes than out of looking for "concealed beauties." Good critics always grow out of this tendency, and to all who are beginning criticism, I would say with all insistence, "Pray you avoid it." Another paper of Addison's (No. 592) is devoted specially to dramatic critics, but not very much of it is particularly applicable to the present race of critics, as may be judged from this passage: "I do not, indeed, wonder that the actors should be such professed enemies to those among our nation who are commonly known by the name of critics, since it is a rule among these gentlemen to fall upon a play, not because it is ill written, but because it takes. Several of them lay it down as a maxim whatever dramatic performance has a long run [think of the

difference between a long run then and now!] must, of necessity, be good for nothing." We have indifferently reformed these matters now. Our critics certainly do not fall upon a piece because it succeeds, nor are actors here such professed enemies of critics as, from a recent duel, one might conceive them to be in France. Another passage in the same paper is pungent enough, and may be quoted both for this, and for its singularity in that while it will never cease to be applicable, it will never hurt any individual critic's feelings. "I have a great esteem for a true critic. . . . But it is our misfortune, that some who set up for professed critics among us are so stupid, that they do not know how to put ten words together with elegance or common propriety; and withal so illiterate, that they have no taste of the learned languages, and therefore criticise upon old authors only at second-hand."

There is, as I have said, no professed critic who will be hurt by reading this, and some critics possibly may see with what special fitness it can be applied to some other critics. There should be, but perhaps is not, even hope of editors, London and provincial, taking it to heart and being more chary of setting new hands to work with a light heart on a branch of criticism which in truth demands special and rare qualifications that may be vastly developed by well-used experience, but for the original want of which no amount of experience can possibly make up. The chiefest of these qualifications I take to be as follows:—A natural bent to the work, and industry wherewith to cultivate that bent. A good acquaintance with classical authors (not of absolute necessity in the originals), a knowledge of the history of the stage and the history of acting, and a knowledge of contemporary Continental plays and players —these are, as it were, the elementary equipment of a good critic. The greatest is behind, the faculty of judgment, without which all the rest is of no avail except to string together a gossipy and readable article. And as to judgment, another of the ancients, Isaac Disraeli, has a pregnant thing to say on this (the word *amateur* is of course used by him in its old and true sense). "*The talent of judging* may exist separately from the *power of execution*. An amateur may not be an artist, though an artist should be an amateur." This axiom, which scarce needs any support, is, however, supported by various undeniable instances, and it conveys in itself this, that the actor who complains of a critic's fault-finding on the ground that the critic is not, and never could be, an executant actor of any consideration, puts himself completely in the wrong. Such an actor might well remember the proverb, musty though it be, that

lookers-on see most of the game. And though if all the lookers-on be actors of mark their general opinion on all technical things will probably be of more worth than that of an audience of amateurs, yet it follows not that, taking play and acting as a whole, the judgment of the player-audience will outstrip that of critics who can neither write a play nor act in it. To say this is not to say that a born and trained critic may not greatly add to the weight of his criticism by having himself "been through the mill," and therefore knowing something from the inside of the performers' difficulties.

We have now to observe that, in addition to the duty of avoiding a mere desire to be smart, the critic must beware very carefully of personal influence. The days are past, let us hope, when Thackeray's Mugford, proprietor of the then imaginary *Pall Mall Gazette*, found fault with Philip Firmin for praising Balderson the actor as well as Harrocks the other actor, and said to him, "How can we praise Balderson when Harrocks is our friend? Me and Harrocks are thick. Our wives are close friends. If I was to let Balderson be praised, I should drive Harrocks mad. I *can't* praise Balderson, don't you see, out of justice to Harrocks!" Yet, though this might seem overcharged as applied to the present moment, the same temptation exists, and always will exist, in a subtler form, and again I say to all beginning critics, "Pray you avoid it." Now, if our supposed critic has arrived at going no further than putting things gently if a friend acts badly, and at putting things quite as gently if a foe acts badly, if he has superposed this upon all the other qualities mentioned, if he has learnt to distinguish between the merits or defects of a part and those of the actor who plays it, if he can tell a good play from a bad one and give his reasons, if he can distinguish between the distress of mind due to discomfort and that due to bad acting, if he can always have all his information at his fingers' ends, if he can manage never to say that which is not, and always to say that which is without needless offence, if he can combine all these qualities in an article turned out at top speed, and can be content to get very little recognition from those whom he criticises, why, then, he will begin to come near ideal perfection as a critic.

THE MASTERSINGERS OF NUREMBERG.

By W. Beatty-Kingston.

ON many grounds, racial and political as well as ethnological and artistic, the production of Richard Wagner's operatic *chef-d'œuvre* at the Académie de Musique in Paris cannot

but be regarded as one of the most remarkable and interesting events in the musical history of the nineteenth century. It marks the appreciable decline of rancour in the animosity heretofore entertained by the vanquished French towards their Teutonic conquerors; for *Die Meistersänger* is the most essentially and exclusively German of all Wagner's tone-plays, and, as such, would certainly not have been tolerated by any Parisian audience a few years ago. In the first place, though not the most perfect and uncompromising expression of the fundamental idea that lies at the root of the Wagnerian method of poetical and musical composition in connection with the lyrical drama—an idea which the Saxon Master, according to his own admission, only fully expounded and illustrated in *Tristan and Isolde*—it was utilised by Wagner as a vehicle for the elaborate display of all the ingenious contrivances that he considered essential to the realisation of his ideal, in respect to the tone-drama; the "endless melody contrivance," a substitute for organic and clearly defined tunes; the "memory contrivance," which not only fits out personages with musical uniforms by which the ear may infallibly recognise them, even when they happen to be invisible to the eye, but serves to remind the attentive listener of things abstract as well as things concrete; and the employment of the orchestra as narrator of story and interpreter of sentiment, in the stead of the singers, to whom that function had been entrusted by all the pre-Wagnerian composers of opera. In *Die Meistersänger*, as in *Tristan*, *Rheingold*, and *Goetterdaemmerung* even more peremptorily, the orchestra recounts a symphonial narrative which is accompanied *ad libitum* by the voices of the principal and subordinate characters in the play. These "methods" are so entirely at odds with French operatic traditions and French musical taste that the attempts of native composers, such as Reyer in *Sigurd*, and even Saint-Saëns (in his *Henry VIII.*) to plagiarise the Wagnerian contrivances have fallen flat or, at the best, have found only a half-hearted acceptance in France. Hence it cannot but appear surprising that the management of the Paris Opera House should adventure the production of a work which out-Herods Herod in the matters of "melodic infinity," "mnemonic phrases," and "orchestral narrative." What chance of a popular or even academical success can *Les Maîtres Chanteurs* possibly have in the home of Auber, Boïeldieu, and Halévy; of Gounod, Bizet, and Délibes?

Secondly, Wagner's *capo d'opera*—and I have no hesitation in assigning this artistic rank to *Die Meistersänger*—with its *personnel* of tradesfolk and handicraftsmen, unmistakably aims at the ideali-

sation of what the Germans themselves familiarly designate as "the homebaked virtues," which the French scorn and contemn as the most objectionable of Teutonic characteristics. Our sprightly neighbours have never understood either German sentimental naïveté or British unemotional common-sense; and they, from time immemorial, have most conspicuously exemplified the old axiom *omne ignotum pro horribili*. A cobbler who is also a poet, and the refinement of whose æsthetic judgment is only equalled by the high finish of his shoemaking, appears a monstrosity to the French mind, which is pedantic as well as cynical, and inclines to repudiate any violation of "the unities" with intellectual dudgeon. Hans Sachs can never enlist the sympathies of a Parisian audience, because he so absolutely typefies the salient contrasts of German character—its dreaminess and sagacity, its fancifulness and practicality, its poetic idealism and prosaic realism. The most frivolous and the most serious of civilised human beings are to be found among Frenchmen. By the frivolous variety the Bavarian cobbler-poet will certainly be regarded as an unmitigated bore, having nothing entertaining to say, and saying it with wearisome prolixity. The serious Frenchman, on the other hand, is nothing if not logical; it is therefore unavoidable that he should classify Sachs as an anomaly, repugnant to the orderly and justly balanced intelligence. Obviously, there is no section of the French dramatico-musical public to which Wagner's masterpiece can be other than relatively displeasing, if not positively offensive or insupportably repugnant.

Another gigantic obstacle to the production of *Die Meistersänger* in Paris, which appears insurmountable to anyone thoroughly familiar with the idiosyncrasies of the French and German languages, is the difficulty of rendering Wagner's libretto into French that shall be at once intelligible to any audience "to the manner born" and adaptable to the musical text of the opera. Probably a rhymed version, adequately conveying the meaning of the original lines to a gathering of French men and women, is altogether out of the question. Even with the aid, however, of unscrupulous paraphrase, embodied in blank verse or inorganic prose, as unmetrical and unrhythmical as an ordinary telegraphic message, there are many passages in the *Meistersänger* book which appear to be absolutely untranslatable into French; that is, assuming that any relation of fitness is to be maintained between words and music, as delivered by the vocalists of the "cast." Brief reference to an episode of the first act will aptly illustrate the dilemmas from which the most ingenious French adapter of Wagner's text will struggle in vain

to extricate himself, if he attempted to follow or even imitate the original. The situation is as follows. Walther von Stolzing, having declared his passion to Eva Pogner at the conclusion of divine service, lingers sentimentally in the church, where preparations are just being made for a general meeting of the Mastersinger Guild. David, the leading spirit of the Nuremberg 'prentices, is superintending the arrangements, and drifts into conversation with the Minstrel Knight. In reply to the latter's questions respecting the aims and practices of the Guild, David instructs Stolzing with appalling erudition as to the poetical rules and musical regulations of the song-tribunal. Among the absolutely useless information with which he mercilessly drenches his interlocutor is a catalogue of from forty to fifty "tones and manners," the use of which in solo or part-singing is sanctioned by the Masters. The titles of a few of these "modes and methods" of composition for the voice will exemplify the insuperable character of the difficulty they offer to the French translator. There are, for instance, the "English tin manner," the "cinnamon-pipe manner," the "frog," "calf," "bullfinch" manners, the "altered and much-devouring manner," and many others of no less mysterious nomenclature, which have a certain historical value by reason of their indisputable authenticity, Wagner having reproduced them literally, in his libretto, from the archives of the Mastersinger Guild, reverently preserved to the present day in the ancient city of Nuremberg. But what probability is there that they can be even approximatively interpreted in a language such as the French, devoid of compound words; in which, for example, the compact German term "Froschmode" (frog-manner) can only be rendered "façon de la grenouille"? Obviously, six syllables cannot be made to fit music that was written to accommodate three. Again, regarding these archaic "termina technica" from another point of view, what meaning could "la manière d'étain à l'anglaise"—a textual rendering of "die englische Zinnmode"—be expected to convey to a French understanding? After the final performance of the *Meistersänger* at Munich on June 21, 1868, which began at 6 p.m. and finished half-an-hour before midnight, Dr. Eduard Hanslick—then as now the most capable musical critic in the Austrian Empire—remarked that the "catalogue of modes" had sounded to him like a list of carriage-harness set to music. "To render such pedantic rubbish into any foreign language," he added, "is simply impossible. To the vast majority of born Germans it is practically void of meaning. What possible significance can it have, in translation, for Italians, Englishmen,

or Frenchmen? One might as well try to give them comprehensible versions of the senseless, mooning speeches that fill every page of the *Tristan* libretto, and are become proverbial for emptiness of meaning; such as 'Rapture-sublimatised weaving, never-again-to-be-awakened-sweetly-known-wish,' which may be pronounced a particularly choice specimen of Tristan's breathless, alliterative stuttering."

The *Mastersinger* is Wagner's only comic opera. In some sort it is a burlesque of *Tannhäuser*, the heroic elements of which, as far as the singing competition or tourney is concerned, it broadly travesties, substituting common-place shopkeepers for highflown bardic nobles, and making the self-constituted judges of poetical and musical inspiration doubly stultify themselves by first pronouncing a condemnatory verdict upon a production which they are incapable of understanding, and then reversing that verdict without any manifest ground for their change of opinion. Tannhäuser's song is denounced by a jury of nobly-born minstrel knights, because it deals with licentiousness and Paganism in an eulogistic spirit. Walther von Stolzing's prize cantata is vilified by a committee of plebeian burgesses, because it bristles with beautiful melodic and harmonic innovations which puzzle, and therefore irritate, all the dull-witted pedants of a guild in which the narrowest sort of conservatism is rampantly incorporate. The musical exposition of this somewhat ponderous satire upon mediæval self-sufficiency is genuinely humorous; but inasmuch as its humour is chiefly expressed in cunning instrumentation, I venture to doubt that it can be keenly relished by the habitués of the Paris Opera House.

THE ACTOR'S ART.

By W. Davenport Adams.

THERE is much that is interesting in the book which Mr. J. A. Hammerton has written on "The Actor's Art;" the writer shows in it considerable familiarity with the literature of the subject, and especially with the history of acting in England. It is, however, no disparagement to the work to say that the freshest and most immediately useful part of it is that which is contributed by the well-known and popular players whose co-operation Mr. Hammerton has been successful in securing. The third section of the volume is entitled "Living Actors on their Art," and it is this that gives to the treatise most value and permanence. In the case of Sir Henry Irving and Miss Ellen

Terry, Mr. Hammerton contents himself with reproducing the chief features of their former extant utterances on the topic of acting. This is done partially, also, in the case of Mrs. Kendal, who supplies, however, some fresh observations. Wholly new contributions, of various lengths, come also from such accepted and distinguished performers as Miss Geneviève Ward, Miss Kate Phillips, Mr. Toole, Mr. Lionel Brough, Mr. Harry Paulton, Mr. Harry Nicholls, Mr. Charles Warner, Mr. Tree, Mr. Alexander, Mr. Maude, and many of the younger generation.

It is curious to find Mrs. Kendal, perhaps the most accomplished of living actresses, consummate in every detail of her art, dwelling mainly upon the necessity, would an actor be widely and deeply popular, of possessing personal charm. "It is a common thing," she says, "to see very finished actors never rising beyond second or third-rate parts, while others of far less artistic finish climb to the very front and draw the public to see them in every new part they may assume. The one class lacks that sympathetic nature which is the other's chief endowment; and while the public sits unmoved, but admiring, at the performance of the one, it is roused to enthusiasm by the impersonations of the other." Miss Geneviève Ward, on another page, lays most stress upon "dramatic instinct"—"that natural quality which enables one almost intuitively to simulate the effects produced by the various emotions and passions on the human creature, and to understand the workings of those emotions." At the same time, Miss Ward insists upon the importance to the player of "a good figure, an expressive face, clear, sonorous, penetrative voice, articulation distinct and unhesitating, and a graceful bearing"—all of them elements of fascination, though not inevitably combining to produce that somewhat elusive result which we call "charm." Miss Kate Phillips is more severely practical in her remarks, which are brief and to the point. She advises stage aspirants to "walk on" (if they can manage it!) at one of our leading west-end theatres, where they will be well "stage-managed," besides having the advantage of witnessing, and being associated with, the best acting of the day. And "don't remain too long in the one place," she goes on to say; "move about." "See different styles and methods." Study fencing and dancing, and gain a thorough knowledge of Shakspere's plays—especially of Hamlet's advice to the players.

The male artists of long experience who contribute to this volume are virtually unanimous in their exhortations to beginners. Mr. Toole suggests that they should first study acting assiduously from the front of the house; then get into a provincial

répertoire company, and study acting on the boards. "The best school for the actor," says Mr. Toole, "is the theatre," agreeing, however, with Miss Phillips in recommending the study of Shakspere. "To become an actor," observes Mr. Lionel Brough, "requires a long and arduous training, which can only be obtained by joining a company like that of Miss Thorne or Mr. Greet, where pieces are being continually changed, and where, by experience, a definite line of business may be determined upon." Acting, Mr. Harry Paulton holds, does not require to be taught. "Providing a man has the natural aptitude and the latent ability, all that is necessary to make him an actor is experience and practice." Mr. Paulton does not deny that an old player can give a young one many valuable hints, but he protests that teaching is of no use without actual exercise in the art. Mr. Nicholls sounds the same note. "Incessant study, constant rehearsals, continual changes of pieces, supporting the 'stars,' and acting in every possible and impossible kind of play"—that was what he himself encountered, and he recommends the like to other people. Mr. Warner's advice to the young and ambitious is to "study incessantly—Shakspere by preference; but all the old dramatists. This course will widen, expand, and tremendously increase their desire for good and noble work, besides greatly improving their mind."

Very characteristic are the pronouncements Mr. Hammerton has extracted from the younger actor-managers. Mr. Tree is of opinion that the chief aim of the actor should be to "impersonate"—to "let his personality be subservient to the part he is playing." To Mr. Tree it seems that an actor "should possess so supple a nature that he should be able to play any part for which his physique does not render him unfit." All acting, in his view, should be "character" acting. Mr. George Alexander's opinion is that "the modern actor is best trained in one of two schools: First, the amateur school—so much despised, so greatly the stage's creditor; second, the country training of a sound répertoire company, where too many plays are not embarked upon, and yet the necessary variety is not wanting." He admits that there are some things which can be taught; "but, without the practice, if an aspirant have an earnest love for the art he is cultivating, my impression is that he would learn more as a super on the Lyceum stage, if he took note of, and profited by, the excellent examples of histrionic perfection always to be seen there." In other words, Mr. Alexander agrees with Mr. Toole that "the best school for the actor is the theatre." In Mr. Cyril Maude's view, concentration of thought and utter loss of

self are the first requisites of good acting; and he calls especially for clearness and variety of diction. "These words, 'clearness' and 'variety' might almost serve as a motto for stage aspirants."

In the course of the same communication, Mr. Maude describes particularly the processes by which he builds up his impersonations. "First of all," he says, "I always like to be present at the 'reading' of the play, so that I may be enabled to form a really good idea of the piece, and of my own particular part. I also consider it desirable to hear all that is said by the other characters in the play concerning the character I have been called upon to impersonate." In this opinion he is supported by Mr. Bassett Roe, who condemns the habit of getting the words of a part by rote, and holds that it is best to attend at least one or two rehearsals before committing those words to memory. Actors, he thinks, should first "get a general idea of the entire piece, and especially of those scenes in which they are chiefly concerned," finding out what relation their parts bear to the general scheme. "My method of study," writes Mr. Leonard Outram, "has been, first, to acquaint myself with the meaning of the play, and the bearing of my own part upon its story and situations." This is pleasant reading. I have conversed with actors and actresses who confessed quite readily that they knew nothing of the play in which they were appearing except the words and "cues" of their rôle. They had not even had the curiosity to stand at the wings to watch the action and development of the piece. What sort of acting could performers of this indifferent sort be expected to supply?

Novices will find much to attract and instruct them in the details furnished by Mr. Acton Bond, Mr. Weedon Grossmith, Mr. Arthur Bourchier, Mr. H. Reeves Smith, and Mr. Eric Lewis as to the methods by which they master and perfect their parts. Less palatable will be certain deliverances, which I have left to the last, by Mr. Charles Warner and Mr. Lionel Brough. These go to the root of the matter, and deserve to be carefully pondered by the would-be actor. "Let those," says Mr. Warner, "who are contemplating a theatrical career pause and reflect. The stage is already overcrowded. I have seen good and sterling actors and actresses almost wanting bread. The rush for stage life lately has been immense, and only those who are endowed by nature with great dramatic gifts can hope to succeed." To Mr. Hammerton Mr. Lionel Brough writes:—"I am hardly 'in touch' with your book. I find the profession so overstocked with would-be actors, and, being a prominent official

on all our theatrical charities, I find so many of these persons on our funds, that I think a book which suggests methods of recruiting our already overstocked ranks might, instead of being a blessing be a 'curse.'" The warning is not unneeded. The theatrical profession has more "failures" than any other; and why? Because, when a man or a woman who has once trodden the boards finds it impossible to get work. He or she, instead of falling back upon some other means of livelihood, prefers to struggle on, hoping against hope, and depending for existence upon one or other of the theatrical Funds. Mr. Warner is quite right: "Only those who are endowed by nature with great dramatic gifts can hope to succeed," and there are instances in which even they fail. The stage, like journalism, medicine, and other professions, is only for those who have exceptional ability and stamina. For all others it is but dust and ashes.

SHAKSPERE AND MARY FITTON.

By F. J. Furnivall.

THE welcome publication by Lady Newdegate of the Letters and Documents at Arbury from, to, and about Anne and Mary Fytton, from 1574 to 1618,[1] has happily revived the discussion of who are the subjects of Shakspere's Sonnets, the man right fair, and the woman colour'd ill:

> Two loves I have, of comfort and despair,
> Which like two spirits do suggest me still:
> The better angel is a man right fair,
> The worser spirit a woman colour'd ill.
>
> To win me soon to hell, my female evil
> Tempteth my better angel from my side,
> And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
> Wooing his purity with her foul pride.
>
> And, whether that my angel be turned fiend,
> Suspect I may, yet not directly tell;
> But being both from me, both to each friend,
> I guess one angel in another's hell.
>
> Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,
> Till my bad angel fire my good one out.
>
> Sonnet cxliv.

This Sonnet and the 138th first appeared, with some changes, in *The Passionate Pilgrim* of 1599, while in 1598 Francis Meres, in his *Palladis Tamia*, spoke of Shakspere's "sugared Sonnets"

[1] Gossip from a Muniment Room, being Passages in the Lives of Anne and Mary Fytton. Transcribed and edited by Lady Newdigate-Newdegate. (London: D. Nutt, 1897).

among his private friends.[1] It is to these years, then, that we naturally turn, to see if any folk of higher birth and station than the poet can be found, who fit the allusions that he makes to them. Of higher birth and station I say, for this is implied, as regards the young man, in almost every sonnet to him; and as regards the woman, her skill in music, her attractiveness, her power over Shakspere and his friend, force us to fancy her an educated woman of the upper class.

The main clue to the youth who inspired Shakspere to write his Sonnets, is given in the Dedication to the first edition of them in 1609, by T. T., the man who got G. Eld to print them, and William Aspley to sell them. The Dedication runs, putting modern stops: "To the onlie Begetter of these issuing Sonnets, Mr. W. H., all Happinesse, and that Eternitie promised by our ever-living Poet, wisheth the well-wishing Adventurer in setting forth." Now, clearly this means that Thorpe asserted that the man to whom Shakspere promised eternity in his Sonnets was Mr. W. H., who begot them, who caused Shakspere to write them.[2] And the only W. H. of high station whom we know to have cared for Shakspere is William Herbert, who was born on April 8, 1580, came to live in London in the spring of 1598, and became the third Earl of Pembroke on the death of his father on January 19, 1601. To William Herbert and his brother Philip, Earl of Montgomery, the First Folio of Shakspere's works was dedicated by Shakspere's followers, Heminge and Condell, in 1623, and they say that these lords had shown Shakspere "much favour," and liked his plays.[3] Thorpe dedicated other books to William Herbert, Lord Pembroke, in an elaborate and fulsome style; but if Shakspere's Sonnets were dedicated to this nobleman, Thorpe would naturally use a blind like "Mr. W. H.," inasmuch as the poems disclosed the young lord's successful intrigue with the older Shakspere's mistress. The first twenty-six Sonnets are addressed to a beautiful, fair young man, and urge him to marry. Now, in the August of 1587, before William Herbert came to London, his father and mother (Sir Philip Sidney's sister) were

[1] He named also the Venus and Adonis, and Lucrece; and of Comedies, the Two Gentlemen of Verona, Errors, Love's Labour's Lost and Won, Midsummer Night's Dream, and Merchant of Venice; of Histories and Tragedies, Richard II., Richard III., Henry IV. (1596-8), K. John, Titus Andronicus, Romeo and Juliet.

[2] The quibbles that "begotten" means also "procurer," the man who got the MS. for Thorpe, and that "that Eternitie promised by our ever-living Poet," means only "eternal fame for thus getting the MS. for publication," are unworthy of discussion.

[3] "Your Lordships have been pleas'd to think these trifles some-thing heeretofore, and have Prosequted both them and their Authour living with so much favour . . . so much were your Lordships' likings of the several parts when they were acted, as, before they were published, the Volume ask'd to be yours."

trying to arrange a marriage between him and Bridget Vere, daughter of the Earl of Oxford, and grand-daughter of Lord Burghley; but nothing came of it. He might well then be entreated to take another wife. But as Whyte writes on August 16, 1600: "I don't find any disposition at all in this gallant young lord to marry." He was after other game. A document in the Record Office states: "One Mrs. Martin . . . tould me that she hath seene preists mary gentlewomen at the Courte, in that tyme when that Mres. Fytton was in great fauour, and one of her Maiesties maids of honor; and during the time that the Earle of Pembrooke favord her, she would put off her head-tire and tucke upp her clothes, and take a large white cloake, and marche as though she had been a man, to meete the said Earle out of the Courte." [1] The result of one of these excursions in July, 1600, was, that Mary Fitton gave birth to a boy in March, 1601. He died soon after.

This Mary Fitton was the second daughter of Sir Edward Fitton, Knight, of Gawsworth, in Cheshire. She was baptised there on June 24, 1578, so that she was a mother before she was twenty-three, while the father of her son was under twenty-one. As soon as Mary's pregnancy was known, the Queen put young Pembroke into the Fleet Prison for a month or less, and then banished him from Court. Mary Fitton was committed to "my Lady Hawkyns" for her bringing to bed, and retired in disgrace, as Pembroke, though he confest his naughtiness, utterly renounced all marriage.

Here, then, is a lady who (1) if she can be connected with Shakspere; (2) if she is dark,[2] seductive, and musical; (3) if she can be said to have broken her "bed-vow;" and (4) if "W. H." is William Herbert, Lord Pembroke, that may be the lady whom Shakspere loved.

(1) The link with Shakspere is the slightest possible, only this, that his comic fellow-actor, Will Kempe, in 1600, dedicated to "Mistris Anne (that is, Mary) Fitton, Mayde of Honour to the most sacred Mayde Royal, Queene Elizabeth," his *Nine Daies Wonder*, an account of his morris-dancing in nine days from London to Norwich. Kempe, we see, knew so little of Mary Fitton as to call her by the name of her long-married sister, Mrs. Anne Newligate. Why should Shakspere have

[1] *Shakspere's Sonnets.* By Thos. Tyler, 1890, p. 75.

[2] In the volume of Poems by Pembroke and Sir B. Rudyerd, published by Donne in 1660, there is a very amatory poem by Rudyerd on a beautiful dark woman not enjoyed by him. She had two bastard children in later life, but then married. Her friends stuck to her.

known anything more of her? There is no evidence that he did. (2) Was Mary Fitton dark, seductive, and musical? If the portraits at Arbury, that Lady Newdegate states, on wholly insufficient evidence, to be those of Mary Fitton, Mary was a fair, red-and-white girl, with brown hair, not black, like Shakspere's dark lady; and there is an end of the matter. But Lady Newdegate has not treated us quite fairly in this matter of the portraits. She has not given a photogravure of the third portrait, on wood, at Arbury, with the inscription: "Countess of Stamford, 2nd daughter of Sir Edward Fitton, Knt.," which she showed Mr. Tyler and me, in 1891, as one of Mary Fitton,[1] and which is like enough to the other two portraits of Mary to be one of the same person,[2] though it no doubt is that of Miss Mildred Maxey, who sent it to the first Lady Anne Newdigate at Arbury: "I have, sweete sister, lefte my pecter at my brothers loging for you. I think it not worth the trobbel in having it com downe, for it should have bine drane in a canfis, and this is a borde; but if my brother Cooke had bine in the tone,[3] I wold [have] taken order with him for it; but I know if you do send to him, he will send it you in a case."

If Lady Newdegate, Mr. Tyler and I were right in accepting this portrait as Mary Fitton's in 1891, and Lady N. is right in changing her mind and saying now that it is Mildred Maxey's, may we not believe that all three portraits are those of Miss Maxey? Mr. Tyler has no doubt that they are.[4] The Mildred portrait is certainly like, though not quite the same as, those claimed as Mary Fitton's; it is of a fair, red-and-white girl, with brown hair like Mary's, and, too, with her dark, blue-grey eyes. Moreover, the hair of Mary's statue in Gawsworth Church seems once to have been coloured black: the colour can only be seen now in the interstices of the coils of hair, but assuredly it looks black. One cannot accept as conclusive the evidence of the Arbury portraits supposed to be those of Mary Fitton.

That Mary was seductive we have sufficient proof in her selection to act and dance at Court, in her intrigues with Pembroke, Lougher, and Leveson, and her complete capture of old Sir William Knollys. As to her music we know nothing, save that she danced.

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[1] See my letter in *The Academy*, 21st March, 1891.

[2] Had a photogravure been given of this third portrait, every reader could have udged for himself.

[3] Town.

[4] He remarks that in the double portrait the Fitton badge, the pansy, is on Anne Newdigate's dress only, while a carnation is on the so-called Mary's, in her ruff, and she but holds a pansy, with other flowers, in her hand.

(3) Can Mary Fitton be said to have broken her "bed-vow," by her connection—if she ever had any—with Shakspere? She cannot have been married in 1598-1601, nor, says Mrs. Stopes, can she have had, as Maid of Honour at Court, any separate parlour to receive Shakspere or any visitor in, and play to him. But Mr. Archer has made the ingenious suggestion that, as Lady Newdegate's book shows her to have had some engagement or understanding (which she did not keep) to marry old Sir William Knollys as soon as his old wife died,[1] this informal troth-plight may have been treated as a bed-vow, and may also explain the third "Will in overplus" of Sonnet 135, beyond Will Herbert and Will Shakspere:—

Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy "Will,"
And "Will" to boot, and "Will" in overplus.

No doubt Shakspere would have enjoyed calling an amorous old billy-goat "Will in overplus," but the epithet is too doubtful to base any theory on. Mary Fitton went to Pembroke "out of the Court!" Did she go to the actor Shakspere, too? Is it likely? "Bed-vow" ought surely to imply a married woman; and as yet, none such has turned up among the harem of Pembroke's mistresses. Clarendon tells us (*Hist.*, i., 79) that he was all his life immoderately given up to women, and indulged himself in pleasures of all kinds, almost in all excesses.

(4) Was "W. H." William Herbert, Lord Pembroke? Some indications, as noted above, besides others not noticed here, point to him as Shakspere's young Sonnet-friend; but there are several against this view. (See Mr. Gollancz's Introduction to the Temple Edition of the Sonnets, p. xiv.-xvi., though they are not strongly founded.[2]) Now I want to notice another here. We have seen that if two of the Arbury portraits, reproduced by Lady Newdegate, are to be trusted, the Sonnet-lady, who ought to

[1] The old gentleman is most amusing in his desire to be rid of his old bramble and briar.

[2] Shakspere's recourse to the words and phrases of his early plays was natural when he was writing to a young fellow of eighteen. To put the grand, penetrative and weighty Sonnet on Lust, No. 129, before 1600-1, is surely a mis-judgment. If young Herbert is the Sonnet-man, he would, when fresh from the country, have rushed eagerly into friendship with the attractive Shakspere, who would introduce him to his dark lady. The *Passionate Pilgrim* Sonnet of 1599 (No. 144, above), shows that the seduction of the youth by her was then in progress, though not complete—both were of a coming-on disposition—and it would go on till she threw over the old poet for the young noble. As to Shakspere's love for Herbert giving "the lie" to his professions of devotion in the *Adonis* and *Lucrece* to Southampton, a great deal may have happened in four years. There is no evidence that Southampton kept up his alliance with Shakspere after 1594. He had plenty of other folk and work to look after; and we can't tie an enthusiastic young poet down to his dedications for his whole life. If Shakspere hadn't turned up Southampton before that nobleman joined in Essex's rebellion in 1601, he surely did so then.

be dark and black-haired, is fair and brown-haired. So, if the so-called Muytens portrait of Pembroke, a half-length, at Wilton, can be relied on, he, the fair Sonnet-youth, was swarthy and black-haired. But here again comes the question. Is this portrait trustworthy? It has been only a few years in possession of the family. Lord Pembroke bought it but a few years ago from a dealer in the North. It had no pedigree; and, though labelled as by "Mytens," there is no link to connect it with the portrait by "Mittens" of William Herbert, the third Earl, seemingly ordered for Charles I. in 1627 and paid for in 1633, as shown by the last entry in F. Devon's Issues of the Exchequer in James I. time. When I first saw this portrait one dark evening by candlelight, I thought it might represent a man who might have been fair in youth; but on studying it more closely since by daylight, I hold Lord Pembroke right in saying that the original of it must have been "swarthy," with black hair. The full-length portrait of William Herbert at Wilton was painted by Vandyke from the statue at Oxford, and its colours cannot, of course, be trusted; but it is not that of a fair man.

The conclusion of the whole matter then is, that though the suggestion of William Herbert and Mary Fitton as the man and woman of the Sonnets is the best yet made, there is nothing like proof or good evidence that they are the folk we want, and there is at least much evidence against them. Their value is, that they are types of the persons we are in search of; and even those jocose, cart-before-the-horse people who insist that W. H. was H. W., Henry Wriothesley, Lord Southampton, ought to join the rest of us Shakspere students in thanking Mr. Tyler, Mr. Harrison, Lady Newdegate, and all others who have helped in the investigation of this Herbert-Fitton problem. No doubt amiable monomaniacs will go on proclaiming solutions of the Sonnet-puzzle till the Day of Doom. The sane student will be content to hold (1) that in the Sonnets Shakspere *did* unlock his heart—that they reveal the depths and heights of the great soul which wrote his plays; (2) that his fair male friend and his dark, naughty, woman-love have not yet been identified, and probably never will be; (3) that for knowledge of Shakspere, this identification is needless, however interesting it would be. What we want the Sonnets for, and what we get in them, is Shakspere himself, unhid by any character in a play.

THE TRUE STORY OF LA PERICHOLA.

By May Crommelin.

NOW that Offenbach's pretty operetta has been seen again, after years of neglect, there are many of its spectators

who vainly ask each other: What does La Perichole mean? Or, why should the plot be laid in Lima? There are few persons in England, perhaps, who know that "La Perichol*a*," for this is the true Spanish ending, was a real Peruvian woman. Still fewer may have heard the story of her humble birth, her passionate youth—unbridled in its luxury, so far as it lay within the power of a deeply enamoured old Viceroy of the Western Indies to gratify the wildest whim of his adored mistress. Then her end, when abandoned by the grandee of Old Castille. How unusual!—calm, womanly, and sincerely devout. It is as though a mountain stream, after leaping over some cliff edge in sheer waterfall, should not foam and boil away its useless course among rocks, but rather spread into a tranquil lake, a source of blessing to the dwellers by its green shores.

Visiting Peru three years ago, I was taken over the former house of La Perichola, for her fame still survives in Lima. Also I came upon the following details concerning the beautiful Indian girl, when reading various old Spanish memoirs of Peru in the national Biblioteca. Miquita was her name, and her life story began towards the middle of the last century. By birth Miquita was a *chola*, from a small coast-town; that is to say, she was of the large *cholo* class, of native Peruvian blood, slightly mixed with Spanish. These cholos are mostly seaboard folk, far more brave and hardy than the timid, inland natives, or the mountain Indians. In northern coves it is a fine sight to see the men, aye, and even tiny boys, daring the great Pacific breakers, as they paddle astride of mere reed bundles, which they call their "little horses." Their women are handsome, and many a strong, comely chola milk vendor or washerwoman may be seen any day in Lima, wearing a mannish felt hat and toga-like cloak, as she rides astride on her mule between milk cans and panniers.

By nature, says one chronicler, Miquita was imperious and impulsive. She had a fine voice and a beautiful face, with "eyes as black as a bad intention." So, it happened that being drawn to Lima, the capital, she was attracted to the stage, and quickly became a popular favourite. And so it likewise chanced that the blue-blooded Viceroy of the King of Spain, Amat, who was sixty years of age, saw her from his vice-regal box, and fell desperately in love. In spite of the disparity between their ages, the beautiful girl seems either to have really returned his passion with affection, or, at least, to have shown herself entirely loyal in the liaison that sprang up between them. For, not even in Ricardo Palma's pages (the gossip), is there any mention of another lover.

But after two years of life's tropical sunshine, there broke a storm. Miquita was always the star of the Lima theatre, but one

night, while singing, she was in bad voice. "More soul, woman! more soul!" whispered the manager, who was acting with her. Then, by way of rousing her spirit, he added, "Why! Inés (the second actress) would do better than that." Goaded by the taunt, Miquita's instincts, drawn from untutored forbears, asserted themselves in a burst of fury. She turned upon the manager and struck him full in the face, before the footlights. Struck him, with his illustrious Excellency and all the staff looking on, their grave dignity outraged! "To prison! to prison with the jade," shouted the whole audience; doubtless as easily roused then as now, in South America, at all public spectacles. A scene of violent uproar followed: the curtain fell, the act stopped. Most likely benches were torn up and hurled on the stage; for even in our calmer days that would happen for less provocation in the "City of Kings." Then came a still worse quarter of an hour for luckless Miquita. The fair offender, with still heaving breast and flashing eyes, was summoned to appear instantly before the incensed Vice-King of the Indies, to answer for having offered so gross an insult in his presence. Stammering with rage, says the chronicler, and "*turning as red as a cooked crab*," Amat bitterly reproached the lately adored queen of his heart. Then, in a provincial accent which changed *o* into *i*, he exclaimed before the bystanders, "*Pericholi!* (dog of an Indian girl) I have done with you for ever!" And the opprobrious epithet, thus flung with scorn, stuck to Miquita ever after. But, to her praise, in later days, the nickname was uttered with affection by grateful lips that blessed her goodness to the poor. The proud old Spaniard meant to keep his word. But, in spite of her termagant temper, Miquita's charms of face and warmth of heart could not be forgotten till he forgot himself, "till all's forgot." As to her, perhaps she truly cared for his courtly qualities. *Quien sabe?* Or, maybe the lowly-born girl missed the wealth, the incense of flattery, that had intoxicated her brain and gratified her ambition. Howsoever it came about, a friend intervened after some months of separation, and the breach in their attachment was cemented into being the strongest link of the chain that thenceforth bound them.

For fourteen years afterwards La Perichola reigned not only in the Viceroy's heart, but as the uncrowned Queen of Lima. Her infatuated lover built her a handsome house, still standing on the outskirts of the town, hard by an alameda (now cut down) of tall whispering poplars, leading to a gate in the high adobé town walls that recall the days of the Pizarros. The house is now a factory, yet one can trace fine rooms in it; and

imagine Miquita taking the air on the raised terrace with its *mirador*, or stone arbour, overlooking her gardens, the green alameda, and the canal, fed by rushing water from the mighty Andes, in the background. For she had a delightful garden, of which only a bosky, bright-blossomed plot remains, and Amat bore a storm of popular indignation unmoved, when he caused the principal irrigating water-course of that portion of Lima to be diverted from its original bed in order to flow past her orange trees. "She haunts her former house, so the workmen say," we were told by the manager of the factory. Thereupon he called up a peon, who volubly told, with starting eyeballs, how he and a comrade had seen an apparition in broad daylight; a vaporous thing all in white. "I am brave, I am; but the other men died of fright," he gravely assured us. The story is quite possible. For a Peruvian Indian will die on the smallest provocation. If unwell in the morning, he may apathetically announce he feels certain to die by sunset—and does so, generally, from pure indifference to life.

The Perichola's gay doings and reckless disregard of the grave etiquette and ceremonial of a Spanish Court scandalised the ladies of Lima, who boasted descent from the most nobly born of Spanish adventurers that had sought the capital of the West Indies to make their fortunes. Sometimes, when the Viceroy drove in his gilded coach to take the sea air at the pretty village of Miraflores, Miquita shocked onlookers by riding in his escort, astride of her horse, fearlessly! just as she doubtless had often ambled to market on her mule when a girl. The chronicler adds that she wore a laced jacket and hat with plumes, "which became her marvellously." Worse still, in his infatuated adoration, Amat actually gave her leave to use a carriage drawn by four mules; a privilege hitherto reserved for grandees of Castille. Miquita is said to have always preserved a good heart, in spite of her head having been sometimes turned by the (comparatively) giddy height of her position. Coming home one day from the bull-ring, as she was driven down the alameda, she saw a poor priest on foot, carrying the host to a dying person. Now, La Perichola herself sat in a gilded coach, its panels richly painted, while the postilions riding her team of mules wore gay silvered liveries. What a contrast! Miquita looked, and felt struck to the heart. Next instant she stopped her carriage, sprang out, and with fervent prayers persuaded the priest to take her place and go to his destination. Meanwhile, she walked behind the coach in a storm of tears and penitence, tearing the lace and rich embroideries from her gown and strew-

ing them on the ground. Then, as the equipage was sanctified in her eyes, after having carried the host—she presented it, together with the mules, their rich trappings and liveries, to the parish church. This act of the Perichola's naturally caused much talk in Lima. Many praised the generous gift; for, after all, though wayward and exacting, Miquita was a favourite of the people.

But there was one voice that remained mute. Maraquita Castellanos was a rival of the Perichola's. She was a lady of Lima, beloved by a Condé who carried a "cemetery of crosses on his breast." Being enraged at the carriage permitted to the Perichola by the Viceroy, she resolved to show her opinion in the matter. So, at the feast of the Rosario, she walked in the procession poorly clad, with a maid carrying her lap-dog. This little mongrel wore a chased gold collar, set with splendid diamonds. What whisperings, nudgings, and tongue-thrustings in check followed? Still more so when the ceremony ended, and rumour ran that both dog and collar had been presented by the fair lady to a hospital needing funds. "*Why not? I am a pretty woman!*" said Maraquita. And this sentence passed into a proverb to express feminine vanity and extravagance among the people of Lima.

Years rolled by, and the old Viceroy, Amat, was forced to return to Spain. But, although devoted to the last to the Perichola and their only child, he left her behind him in Peru endowed with a large fortune. The last known of him is, that once returned to his native land, and at the age of eighty, he—— married his niece! La Perichola made a very different end. Left alone, wealthy, and still beautiful, she gave herself up entirely to works of charity and to devotion. Her goodness won her such great praise in the "Land of the Sun," where religious fervour and dissolute living are so strangely blended, that at her death, which took place in 1812, there was a splendid funeral in her honour. Her grand-children, now living in Lima, are "citizens of good repute;" and they are said to hold the memory of their grandmother in sincere respect and affection.

THE THEATRICAL RADIUS.

By John Hollingshead.

THE rapid growth of what is called the suburban theatre within the last five or six years has caused some considerable commotion in the theatrical market, some of the proprietors and managers of the central playhouses taking a pessimistic view

of the situation, and a few—notably those who by reason of striking merit and reputation are the most firmly established—taking a view highly coloured with courage and hopefulness. The increase of these local theatres cannot be ignored as a fact, though facts are easily exaggerated and used for false inferences.

The theatre-building activity of the last few years—not unmixed with music-hall energy—has taken place, we have a right to assume, according to the everlasting laws of trade. Theatres have to obey these laws, like every other commercial interest, and the capitalist who is tempted to invest his money in this particular form of bricks and mortar rarely allows his calculations to be disturbed by any theories or prejudices concerning Art. He is building for a tenant who can pay a substantial rent. He is obeying the law of markets. If he builds a theatre instead of a music-hall, it is not from any excessive respect for the drama. It is purely a question of licensing. A theatre only requires one licence, which it can get in twenty-four hours; a music-hall requires two licences, which it can only get (if it is lucky enough to get them) in twenty-four months. The Lord Chamberlain licenses theatres (if not situated in Chelsea) any day at St. James's Palace during reasonable office hours, and his authority commands an Excise licence. The music-hall has to get its music and dancing licence once a year in open court, supported by solicitors and counsel, from the London County Council, and after getting this licence on certain structural conditions, it has to wait six months for another tribunal—the local magistrates, sitting in Brewster Sessions—to apply for a liberty to sell drink, which is very rarely granted. This is one reason—perhaps the chief reason—why building enterprise in the so-called suburbs has favoured theatres instead of music-halls.

The multiplicity of local theatres must be regarded from two points of view—the buildings, as buildings, and the managements as competitors of the central establishments. A thorough investigation of the places of amusement existing in and about London and Westminster in the time of Shakspere, compared with the population of London, and, above all, the visitors to London in those days—would most probably prove that the Elizabethan supply was equal to the Elizabethan demand, and that Victorian London, all things being equal, is not glutted with playhouses. Taking a period not so remote, but within the memory of "old playgoers," "old stagers," and old scribblers like myself—say less than half a century ago, when the population was about half what it is now, and the "visitors" were less than a quarter, the central theatres could be counted on the hands,

while the local theatres were even more numerous than they are at present. In the centre we had Drury Lane and Covent Garden, the Haymarket and the Princess's, the Strand, the Olympic, the Adelphi, and the Lyceum, a theatre at one time called the English Opera-House, though devoted to drama, and sometimes giving two performances a night, like a "gaff" in Whitechapel. I may include the Victoria in this list, because, when called the Coburg, it was used as a chapel of ease to Drury Lane Theatre. The "King's Theatre" in the Haymarket, afterwards called to the day of its death, or rather its brutal murder, was confined to opera and ballet. At this time the strictly local theatres were Sadler's Wells, the Pavilion in Whitechapel, the Garrick in Goodman's-fields, the City of London in Norton Folgate, and the Standard in Shoreditch, a little theatre at King's Cross, the Surrey at the end of the Blackfriars-road, in St. George's-fields, where it stands now, a theatre in King's-road, Chelsea (whose title I forget), the Marylebone, the Effingham, the Bower, the Grecian, the Albert, and the Britannia. The last three were "garden-theatres," like those you meet with in Germany, Bohemia, and Italy, and to these may be added, as dabbling in dramatic sketches, White Conduit House at Pentonville, the Rosemary Branch at Hoxton, and the Red Cow at Dalston. A few years later Highbury Barn entered the lists as a regular theatre, and there were several so-called "Manor Houses" at Hackney and in the Pickwickian Green-lanes at Stoke Newington, and several "pleasure grounds" on the south side of London, like the Sailors' Vauxhall, at Bermondsey, which occasionally amused their visitors with "burlettas"—pieces interspersed with music—which were amiably tolerated by the patent theatre monopolists. They tolerated *Macbeth* in this form at the Lyceum, when the scenes were broken up with interrupting songs and dances. I have not mentioned grandfather "Vauxhall," nor its hopeful son, "Cremorne," but I may mention the "Variety" establishment in the Blackfriars-road, called the Rotunda (now a wine store), said to have been the first concert room in London, after Bagnigge Wells, which introduced mild drinking in the auditorium in the form of port-wine negus.

Here we have eighteen or twenty local theatres with London half its present size, while, at present, we have new houses erected, or in course of erection, at Balham, Brixton (formerly famous for its treadmill), Camberwell (the birthplace of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, and formerly famous for its fair), Islington, Wandsworth, Holloway, Hammersmith, Kilburn, Fulham,

Stoke-Newington and Stratford ("atte Bowe"). I leave out Deptford and Richmond, because both towns always had theatres, such as they were. Edmund Kean acted in the first place, and died in the last. If I add the Britannia, the Pavilion (Whitechapel), the Standard, the Marylebone (now called the West London), the Elephant, and the Surrey, the six survivors of my long list, to the eleven I have enumerated, and throw in a small Bayswater house, I shall only reach eighteen, although I admit the new buildings are theatres of much more architectural importance, and greater holding capacity, than most of the old ones. On the other hand, an account must be taken of the five millions of London population, more or less, which we have now, and the extraordinary number of "floating" visitors. This number has been put at 250,000 persons a day—men, women, and children—one-sixth of whom are said to be Americans —a very devoted body of playgoers. A large percentage of the visitors alone is sufficient to fill to overflowing, every night, every theatre, music hall, concert room, and entertainment gallery open in central London, leaving a large balance, along with the natives proper, to be provided for.

The manner in which these local theatres, especially the new ones, are managed, is quite another question. The old local theatres contented themselves with relying upon stock companies, and in their day were able to collect and pay very good ones. Salaries were moderate. The pieces provided were mostly cheap adaptations and the so-called "legitimate drama." Suburban authors were not costly, and the legitimate drama meant, as it generally does, a drama whose authors are dead, and whose copyrights have expired. Occasionally, a few of the most prominent local theatres attracted "stars"—stars who would now be considered planets. Macready, Elton, Power, Charles Mathews, and many others did a little suburban touring. James Anderson took kindly to the City of London Theatre, and discovered a sterling dramatist in the person of a young house-painter. The system of sending out companies to represent pieces produced successfully in the centre—sometimes with, and sometimes without, the original principals—was not then invented, though "star travelling" had always existed. The A.B.C. companies touring system is now fully developed, and it practically feeds the new local theatre. In some cases the local theatre is selected for a trial trip of a new piece, which is a far more satisfactory trial than the "experimental matinée." The looker-on (like myself) sees the Central Theatre now placed, so to speak, between two fires. There is the well-built, comfortable

even handsome, local theatre, presenting central attractions to its public near their own doors at half-price, the principal actors being good copies, but not always the originals. This is much in a city of such magnificent, but inconvenient, distances as London—with its width of eight miles, and its length of sixteen. This is one form of vigorous competition. In the centre, there is another. The "Variety Theatre" has grown, and is still growing. It is no longer the Music-Hall Grub. It gives light, air, grandeur, comfort, splendour—a piecemeal show that can be taken up or dropped at any hour, freedom of dress, and freedom to smoke. Its prices are about one-half the theatre prices. The conclusion is obvious. The Central Theatre can only keep its ground by ever-increasing intellectual and artistic effort.

MISS AMY SEDGWICK.

By Arthur Escott.

MANY pleasant recollections of old playgoing days will have been aroused by the announcement of the death of Miss Amy Sedgwick, which occurred at her residence, Hill-view, Haywards-heath, Sussex, on November 7, in her sixty-fourth year. In less than a decade she obtained a large following in London as one of the most brilliant of comedy actresses. Born in 1833, she entered the theatrical profession, *The Times* says, in her girlhood, and before long achieved a distinct reputation in the north of England. In the autumn of 1857 she appeared at the Haymarket as Pauline in *The Lady of Lyons*. The performance was received with special favour, and the young actress found herself marked out as one whose progress would have to be watched. The production in the same year of Tom Taylor's *Unequal Match* gave her the opportunity she wished—that of identifying herself with an original and prominent character. Of this opportunity she made excellent use. Her Hester Grazebrook left but little room for criticism, whether as the unsophisticated rustic, the tortured wife, or the mannered woman of society. Among her subsequent impersonations were Rosalind, Beatrice, Lady Teazle, Julia in *The Hunchback*, Juliana in *The Honeymoon*, and Miss Dorillon in *Wives as they Were and Maids as they Are*. For her Palgrave Simpson wrote *The World and the Stage*, wherein she played Kate Robertson. Her progress in public estimation was unusually rapid; at her first benefit, which took place in 1859, the house is said to have been as much crowded as if the manager himself, Buckstone, had been the hero of the

night. In 1861, after giving a little life to two pieces by Edmund Falconer—*Una* and *Does he Love Me?*—Miss Sedgwick migrated to the Olympic, and in the following year to the Princess's. Three of her characters at the latter house were Phœbe Tupper in *One Good Turn deserves Another*, Princess Orelia in *The Winning Suit*, and Aurora Floyd in Cheltnam's version of Miss Braddon's novel. In 1866, at Drury Lane, she went so far out of her usual way as to undertake Lady Macbeth, but did not make a very deep impression. By this time she had grown too stout for most of the characters associated with her name, and her public career came to an informal close when it had lasted about fourteen years.

It was as Hester Grazebrook that Miss Amy Sedgwick chiefly distinguished herself. "The character," John Oxenford wrote, "requires no small ability on the part of the actress who sustains it. In the first act she is the pretty rustic, placed amid a scene that brings additional lustre to to her charms—a village beauty, marred by no humiliating contrast. In the second, she is the pretty rustic out of place, and not a little petted, but still fond and affectionate as ever, until jealousy of Mrs. Montressor converts her into an indignant wife. In the third act the rustic is lost altogether, and we have the woman of fashion, with whom manner is everything. Now, when we say that Miss Amy Sedgwick went through all these phases in a most satisfactory manner, as if perfectly at home in each of them, and marking out each of them as distinctly as possible, we give this young and rising actress 'the highest commendation.'" Her Hester, in a word, was decidedly a "creation."

I made the acquaintance of Miss Sedgwick in 1868, when, always kind-hearted, she gave a reading of the trial scene in Pickwick—how superb her Serjeant Buzfuz was!—at the Castle Hotel, Richmond. Not long afterwards she was playing Hester Grazebrook at the Standard Theatre, and had the goodness to send me a box. That, I believe, was her last, or all but her last, appearance on the stage. It is interesting to recall the fact that among those who supported her at the Haymarket was Sir Henry Irving. Her too early retirement from her profession was due to two marriages, one to Mr. Parkes, the well-known surgeon, and the other to Mr. Goostry, who survives her. Miss Sedgwick's style might have been too artificial for the present day, but had all the attractions of intelligence, refinement, and grace. One of her many admirers was the Queen, who sent a telegram to the widower on hearing of his bereavement.

Portraits.

MR. KYRLE BELLEW.

THE possessor of a name made notable by his father, Mr. Kyrle Bellew began his career on the stage under a self-denying ordinance; he determined that he would not owe success to the fact that he was his father's son. Anyone, therefore, who would trace his earliest dramatic movements must search in old playbills for the name of "Harold Kyrle." It was only when he had won a position under this *nom de guerre* that he cast it off, and took again his real one. Like Mr. William Terriss, his principal rival in the romantic line, Mr. Kyrle Bellew began life at sea. "Gold-mining and what not," as he sums it up himself, claimed his energies for some years, for it was only after the death of his father, who was opposed to his becoming an actor, that he took to the boards. He is still a yachtsman, and whenever he can in his wanderings over half the world, takes a brief spell of boat-sailing to refresh him. So long has he been absent from London, and so short are our memories in these hurrying times, that many people forget Mr. Bellew's long period of work here, and think of him rather as an actor with Australian and American reputations than as one bearing the palm of long success in England. Beginning at the Haymarket with Buckstone, he gradually worked himself into favour and to a leading place in the bill. With Sir Henry Irving at the Lyceum, with the Bancrofts at the old Prince of Wales's, and with Miss Litton at the Imperial Theatre, now awakening once more from its lethargy of so many years, Mr. Bellew did good work and firmly established his place on the London stage. Later on came his picturesque performance that made a hit of the play founded on Ouida's novel, *Moths;* but this was not the kind of work the actor had much love for, and soon afterwards he concluded his twelve years in town, and went to find better openings awaiting him elsewhere. A short visit, some years ago, to play in *The Lights of Home* at the Adelphi, has been since then almost the only break in his travelling record, and a remarkable record it is. All through the United States, Australia, India, China, South Africa, these are the heads under which we may roughly indicate his tours with Mrs. Brown Potter, and South America may be added to the list before long. It is almost entirely in the "legitimate drama" (to use an old-fashioned but serviceable phrase) that he now works.

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MR. KYRLE BELLEW.

At the Play.

IN LONDON.

NO startling event has occurred to disturb the course of theatrical affairs during the past month. The balance continues to be pretty evenly maintained, plays containing the elements of popularity being largely patronised, while others which on the score of want of novelty or of dramatic force lack attractiveness have been as signally neglected. So far as the future is concerned, the most important feature is the speedy return to the Lyceum after his extraordinarily successful tour in the provinces, of Sir Henry Irving, who now promises the production of Mr. Laurance Irving's play, founded on certain incidents in the career of *Peter the Great*, for an early date in January.

The Tree of Knowledge.

A Play, in Five Acts, by R. C. Carton. Produced at the St. James's Theatre, October 25.

Nigil Stanyon ..	Mr. George Alexander	Sweadle..	Mr. George Shelton
Sir Mostyn Hollingworth ..	Mr. W. H. Vernon	Mrs. Stanyon ..	Miss Carlotta Addison
Brian Hollingworth	Mr. Fred Terry	Monica Blayne	Miss Fay Davis
Loftus Roupell	Mr. H. B. Irving	Deborah Sweadle ..	Miss Winifred Dolan
Major Blencoe	Mr. H. V. Esmond	Belle	Miss Julia Neilson

The first and all-important requisite in a dramatist is the ability to see life clearly and as a whole. If his vision be bounded, his outlook narrow, it is impossible he should give us a true picture of things and of people as they really are. To view the world through the medium of books, or even to regard one's own emotions as a trustworthy indication of what others feel and experience, can only end in disaster. Now this, if we may judge by his work, is the method adopted by Mr. R. C. Carton. Admirable as in some respects his plays undoubtedly are, they invariably leave the impression of having been written by a recluse who, in place of seeking inspiration from the great world outside, creates for himself artificial personages, artificial occurrences, and, above all, an artificial atmosphere. In the case of pieces such as *Liberty Hall*, and in a less degree *Sunlight and Shadow*, into which the element of fantasy entered largely, the circumstance was of no great consequence. To complain in these instances would be as reasonable as to grumble that Dickens permitted himself a similar latitude in his Christmas Carols. But

the position of affairs is altered completely when it becomes a question of a play or novel purporting to deal with the events of real life. The attitude alike of public and author is at once changed under such circumstances; the one judges as the other is judged from a totally different standpoint. And this is precisely what has happened in the case of Mr. Carton's last play, *The Tree of Knowledge.*

Unhappily, in attempting to break ground in a new direction, Mr. Carton remains true to his familiar methods and formulæ. To him the world would appear to be bounded by the four walls of his library; his characters are born of an intellectual effort; they lack the informing vitality which only comes to men and women through knowledge and experience of life as it actually is. It may seem a hard thing to say, but it is none the less true, that with only one or two exceptions the characters in *The Tree of Knowledge* are mere puppets, whose destiny is wholly subservient to the will or the caprice of their author. Flesh and blood they are not; or, granting that they are, they only express the views and act according to the impulses of Mr. Carton himself. The play, accordingly, possesses none of that element of inevitableness which is the true spirit of tragedy; a climax certainly is reached, but it is not felt to be the unavoidable outcome of natural events, but the goal which the writer is determined to reach by means, whether convincing or not concerns him little. Throughout the performance we feel consequently that we are moving in an artificial atmosphere, and dealing with unreal people. Not for an instant is the pulse stirred to a quicker throb, or the emotions awakened to a sense of genuine excitement. Mr. Carton has endowed his hero with ideas which no doubt he considers nobly quixotic; he has made of his principal female character a monster of iniquity, and in so doing he probably believes that he is successful in pointing an excellent moral. But to us they are simply the inventions of his brain, whose prototypes, less skilfully sketched perhaps and coloured more highly, may be discovered in any back number of the *London Journal.* We may praise him for the delicacy of his wit, the care he has evidently lavished upon his dialogue, the neatness of his minor characterisation; but when he comes to handle the deeper problems and the greater truths of life, we unhesitatingly refuse to accept his guidance.

Here is the story of the play, briefly related. Some years before its opening, Nigil Stanyon, originally destined for the Church, had fallen a prey to the fascinations of a beautiful adventuress, named Belle, who, eventually tiring of her first choice, deserted him for another swain. So deeply does Nigil

feel the enormity of his own conduct that he concludes, most absurdly, he can never think of asking any good woman to become his wife—this in face of the fact that he loves and is ardently loved by Monica Blayne, a charming young English girl. Presently, it appears that Belle has married Brian Hollingworth, Nigil's dearest friend, without, of course, informing him of her disgraceful past. For some inexplicable reason, Nigil decides that he has done his friend an irreparable injury, and determines that the only course open to him is flight. He is, however, persuaded to remain by the announcement that Brian's father is ruined, and his (Nigil's) services are necessary to the unfortunate pair. Belle, discovering that her husband is practically a bankrupt, casts about for a new conquest, and finds an easy one in a wealthy and extremely cynical young man, called Loftus Roupell. On the point of flying with him, she is, however, confronted by Nigil, who, in an absurdly melodramatic scene, vows he will kill her if she perseveres in an intention, the consummation of which is obviously the one thing most to be desired. The two are interrupted by the return of Brian, who is led by his wife to believe that Nigil is pursuing her with unworthy motives. Nigil disappears, and Belle, having sung her unsuspicious spouse to sleep, hurries off with Roupell. The last act is devoted to the bringing together of Nigil and Monica. So theatrical and unreal is all this, the effect even of the most powerful scenes goes for little, and one can only feel surprised that anybody should for an instant conceive it to be a true picture of life. The piece is fairly well acted. In the negative part of Nigil, Mr. George Alexander plays with his usual earnestness; but even he cannot convince us that Mr. Carton's hero is anything but a very foolish and invertebrate individual. Mr. Fred Terry, as Brian, shows more passion and strength than we have had from him of late, while Miss Julia Neilson invests the character of the despicable Belle with the necessary coolness and contemptuous indifference. Miss Neilson's manner, nevertheless, still suffers from staginess. An exceedingly clever sketch of the cynical Roupell is given by Mr. H. B. Irving, and Miss Fay Davis is altogether delightful as Monica. The remaining characters are all admirably portrayed.

The Little Minister.

A Play in Four Acts by J. M. Barrie, founded on his novel of the same name. Produced at the Haymarket Theatre, November 6.

The Earl of Rintoul .. Mr. W. G. Elliot	Rob Dow .. .. Mr. Sydney Valentine
Rev. Gavin Dishart.. .. Mr. Cyril Maude	Micah Dow .. Miss Sydney Fairbrother
Captain Halliwell .. .. Mr. C. M. Hallard	Sergeant Davidson Mr. Clarence Blakiston
Thomas Whamond .. Mr. Brandon Thomas	Nanny Webster .. .. Mrs. E. H. Brooke
Snecky Hobart .. .. Mr. Mark Kinghorne	Felice .. .. Miss Nina Cadiz
Silva Tosh .. .. .. Mr. F. H. Tyler	Jean .. .. .. Miss Mary Mackenzie
Andrew Mealmaker .. Mr. E. Holman Clark	Lady Babbie .. .. Miss Winifred Emery

The appearance of a dramatic version of *The Little Minister* raises the nice question touching an author's right to deal with

his characters as he will, even to the point of maltreating them. Mr. Barrie's attitude in the matter may be judged from the fact that he has not hesitated to turn his back upon his own creations, and to present them in a new and totally different guise. In the case of a writer of his distinction we hold that this is little better than the act of a literary parricide. To contend that the exigencies of the stage require such-and-such a thing, that for dramatic purposes fundamental changes must be made, is really no justification for undertaking so ruthless a measure. In the picture-gallery of our memories we have hung the original portraits of Babbie and Gavin Dishart, the Little Minister, and even at Mr. Barrie's request we refuse to replace them by a couple of inferior and indifferently executed sketches. The author of *The Little Minister* has, in short, played the part of a heartless parent, who disfigures his children in order that they may find a place in some rary-show, and so secure for him a considerable addition to his income. The proceeding is one with which, candidly, we have no sympathy, and which reveals a want of artistic feeling on Mr. Barrie's part we were certainly not prepared to find in him.

This apart, we cheerfully admit that in *The Little Minister* he has produced a play that is assured great and lasting popularity. The story differs considerably from that related in the novel, which, so far as strength, verisimilitude, and emotional intensity are concerned, it at no point approaches. The book, in short, contained all the elements of a tragedy; the piece is more or less in the nature of a farce. Babbie herself, formerly the headstrong, imperious Egyptian, is now the coquettish daughter of the Earl of Rintoul, and Gavin Dishart but a shadowy remembrance of the Little Minister we once knew and admired. The two are unexpectedly brought face to face at a moment when Babbie, attired as a gipsy, seeks to warn the rebellious weavers of Thrums that the soldiers are at hand, and love on both sides is immediately kindled. Ignorant of his daughter's escapade, the Earl puts a price upon the head of the supposed gipsy, and it is in the hope of saving her that Gavin ventures to Rintoul Castle. Here he discovers Babbie's real identity, and, brokenhearted, quits the place. On their first meeting Gavin, however, had, with the view of protecting the gipsy, declared her to be his wife in the presence of the soldiery, and it occurs to the Earl and Captain Halliwell, Babbie's *fiancé*, both ignorant at the moment that she and the gipsy are one and the same person, what an excellent joke it would be to insist upon the marriage, valid according to Scotch law, being upheld. The situation, of course, is frankly farcical, but it serves the author's purpose

sufficiently well for turning the laugh against the Earl and ensuring the happiness of the youthful lovers. As may be judged, the story is not a strong one, but the scenes of Scotch life help to give it substance. These are very quaint and amusing, although their effect in some measure is marred by the difficulty the Southerner experiences in following the unaccustomed intricacies of the dialogue. Into the part of Babbie Miss Winifred Emery throws herself heart and soul. Indeed, it is an open question whether she does not err somewhat on the side of excess. Her spontaneous gaiety and girlish coquetry are, nevertheless, irresistibly pleasing. Mr. Cyril Maude's Gavin is a very carefully finished portrait, and the Scotch contingent is admirably represented by Mr. Brandon Thomas, Mr. Mark Kinghorne, Mr. Sydney Valentine, and Mrs. E. H. Brooke. The mounting of the piece is really beautiful, while the incidental music, by Sir Alexander Mackenzie, deserves unqualified praise.

The Vagabond King.

A Play, in Four Acts, by Louis N. Parker. Produced at the Court Theatre, November 4.

Don Pedro XIV. .. ..Mr. Murray Carson	Benito .. .. .. Mr. Lewin Mannering
Pandolfo .. .. .. Mr. H. H. Ross	One-Eyed Sammy .. .. Mr. Athol Forde
Don Miguel de Santa Rosa y Paruro Mr. Gilbert Farquhar	Donna Pia .. .. ..Miss Bateman
Marchese di Castelverano Mr. Lawrence D'Orsay	Stella Desmond .. ..Miss Lena Ashwell
Chevalier Moffat .. ..Mr. Sydney Brough	Princess Zea of Santorin Miss Ellis Jeffreys
	Mrs. Wallis .. .. Mrs. Leigh

The Vagabond King is a play containing so much that is excellent and possessing such poetic and imaginative qualities that one is almost tempted to ignore its obvious defects. Yet Mr. Parker has reached a position as dramatist when not to subject his work to stringent criticism would be the reverse of complimentary. We are forced, therefore, to declare that while the author deals with the main theme of his play in a large and generous fashion he has failed to exhibit an equally firm grasp of detail. The impression left on the spectator is consequently one of looseness and incompletion, an impression, by-the-bye, heightened by the inconclusiveness of the last act. *The Vagabond King* is, in short, a play of fine moments rather than of sustained greatness. But these moments are in themselves so effective and satisfying as almost to win condonation for the rest. Even when he is weakest in respect of conduct of plot, Mr. Parker, moreover, is refreshingly strong in the matter of dialogue, so that the listener runs no risk at any time of being bored or irritated. Amid fantastic surroundings a love-story, pure, wholesome, and beautiful as the most exacting could desire, is worked out to a conclusion which, open to

question as it may be on many grounds, cannot but commend itself to the sympathies of the ordinary playgoer. A king who prefers love in a cottage to duty on a throne is unquestionably a very human and intelligible creature, however some may object that he is hardly made of the clay from which heroes spring.

Driven from his kingdom, Don Pedro XIV., King of Peru, has set up his mimic court in Park-lane where, on the opening of the play, he and his ambitious mother Donna Pia, are eagerly waiting the arrival of news announcing the triumph or defeat of one of their followers who has headed a rebellion with the view of overthrowing the existing Republican dynasty. Pedro, himself, is in love with Stella Desmond, daughter of a rich merchant, to whose wealth she has succeeded, but obviously the Catholic King of Peru cannot mate with a commoner and a heretic. Presently the fateful telegram arrives, and is read aloud to the assembled company by Donna Pia, who announces, rather foolishly it must be confessed, seeing that her statement is bound to be contradicted next morning by the newspapers, that the insurrection has been successful and Pedro proclaimed king. As a matter of fact the boot is on the other leg, their supposed partisan having named himself dictator and seized upon the reins of government. Bankrupt in hope and fortune, Donna Pia hits upon the despicable device of marrying her son to Stella, whose £300,000 may in this way be emptied into the royal coffers, while, later, the union can easily be dissolved on the grounds already stated. The wedding takes place. But Pedro speedily tires of his rather demure bride, and turns for amusement to cards, billiards, and a very pronounced flirtation with an ex-circus girl masquerading as the Princess Zea. A quarrel with one of the parasitical members of his court, Pandolfo, ex-king of Sardinia, reveals to Pedro that for two years he has been living on his wife's bounty and squandering her money on his own unworthy pleasures. The shock brings him to his senses, and in an extremely fine scene he announces his determination to renounce the semblance of royalty and at last prove himself to be a man. Here Mr. Parker has shown himself to be dramatic, forcible, and interesting. The last act, unfortunately, although pathetically pleasing, is the weakest and least satisfactory of the four. Stella has apparently saved enough out of the wreck of her fortune to hire a little cottage at Highgate, and hither eventually comes her husband, who in his search for work has had to descend so low as to "doss" with an unsavoury tramp, but who at length returns with the glad tidings that he has secured a berth worth forty shillings a week. So pleased with himself is he that not even the appear-

ance of his mother bringing the intelligence that the crown of Peru may be had for the asking is able to move him from his position. So the curtain falls upon the picture of the reunited lovers content to regard life from the windows of a small cottage at Highgate on two pounds a week.

The piece is capitally acted. Mr. Murray Carson is delightfully easy and genial as the careless, happy-go-lucky Vagabond King, to whose graver moods, however, he also does every justice. Certainly Mr. Carson has seldom displayed so much restrained force as in the fine scene between the two kings, nor exhibited greater vigour than in the superb peroration which brings the third act to a close. Nothing could be more gentle or charming than Miss Lena Ashwell's portrait of Stella, or, let us add, more fully charged with earnestness of purpose. Miss Bateman made a dignified and powerful Donna Pia, while Mr. Sydney Brough and Miss Ellis Jeffreys both distinguished themselves in a high degree.

The Cat and the Cherub.

A Chinese Play, in One Act and Three Tableaux, by Chester Bailey Fernald. Produced at the Shaftesbury Theatre, October 30.

Wing Shee	Mr. Holbrook Blinn	Ah Yoi	Miss Ruth Benson
Chim Fang	Mr. Richard Ganthony	Hwah Kwee	Miss Alethea Luce
Hoo King	Mr. Fred Volpe	Hoo Chee	Miss Hilda Foster
Wing Sun Luey	Mr. E. W. Morrison		

The production of *The Cat and the Cherub* provides London with a new sensation. The action of the little piece is laid in Chinatown, San Francisco, and furnishes a vivid picture of native life there. The result is distinctly interesting. For the first time on the London stage an exact transcript of Chinese characters and of their curious habits is provided. But this is not all. The author has invented a story at once typical and tragic, which he sets forth with remarkable skill. He has surrounded it, moreover, with just the proper atmosphere to render it impressive. It shows how Chim Fang, keeper of a low opium den, kidnaps the child of the wealthy Hoo King, in order to gain the reward which he knows will be offered for the boy's recovery. He is, however, suspected by Sun Luey, son of the learned doctor, Wing Shee, who, in his endeavour to rescue Hoo Chee, meets with his death at the hands of the rascally Chim Fang. Presently Wing Shee discovers the identity of the perpetrator of both crimes. Entering into an apparently friendly conversation with the villain, he forces him to confess his secret, then stuns him with a hatchet, and finally completes the business by strangling the wretch with his own pigtail. Nothing could be more praiseworthy in respect of realism than the manner in which the piece

is mounted and acted. Mr. Holbrook Blinn gives a marvellously fine portrait of the learned doctor, whose self-possession never deserts him even in the most tragical moments. Equally good is Mr. Richard Ganthony's impersonation of the wily, cringing, and cruel Chim Fang, keeper of the opium den. *The Cat and the Cherub* was preceded by *The Judgment of Paris*, a one-act opera founded on *Les Charbonniers*. Save for the fact that several competent artists, such as Miss Marie Elba, Mr. Homer Lind, and Mr. Winckworth appeared in it, the piece is quite beneath notice.

The Scarlet Feather.

Comic Opera, in Two Acts, adapted from the French of MM. Leterrier and Vanloo by Harry Greenbank. Music by Charles Lecocq, with additional numbers by Lionel Monckton. Produced at the Shaftesbury Theatre, November 17.

Rudolph	Mr. E. C. Hedmondt	Marie	Miss Nellie Stewart
San Carlo	Mr. Joseph Tapley	Renée	Miss Decima Moore
Marquis of Sassari ..	Mr. G. H. Snazelle	Felicia	Miss M. A. Victor
Dr. Alphonse ..	Mr. Thomas Q. Seabrooke	Marcelle	Miss Florence Young
Grimaldi	Mr. C. Lawrence		

The production of *The Scarlet Feather* is a frank return to the ways and methods of twenty years ago, when comic opera, as it was understood by such purveyors of the article as H. B. Farnie and Robert Reece, held the town. In those days France furnished the material which was remodelled by more or less skilful adapters to suit English tastes. Since then we have progressed somewhat, and if comic opera is again to be in vogue it is hardly to be expected that it will take the precise form it presented a quarter of a century back. A story based exclusively upon *équivoque* of the most obvious kind is scarcely likely to prove attractive to a generation which has been reared upon the comic ideas and humorous imbroglios invented by Mr. W. S. Gilbert. This fact, Messrs. Williamson and Musgrove, who have assumed the management of the Shaftesbury Theatre, appear to have overlooked. So far as story and characters are concerned *The Scarlet Feather* is a throw-back to a moribund state of things, and were success alone dependent upon these elements the opera, we fear, would stand but a poor chance. In Lecocq's pleasing, although rather familiar, score ; in the splendour of the mounting, in the exquisite taste everywhere displayed, and in the capital all-round performance may be discovered reasons, however, why the piece should attain to popularity.

The Scarlet Feather is the badge of union between a dozen young fellows who have foresworn matrimony, and who agree that should any member of the pact break his vow all his property shall be divided equally among the others. At the opening of the

piece two only remain unmarried, or rather ostensibly unmarried, for both have secretly taken wives unto themselves. Rudolf, Prince of Monaco, has joined his lot with that of Marie, who, to avoid suspicion, has adopted the garb and position of his page, while his friend San Carlo has clandestinely espoused Renée, daughter of the Marquis of Sassari. The two bridegrooms, accompanied by their brides, meet, and then begins the usual game of hide-and-seek, each striving to conceal the truth from the other. The intrigue, it must be confessed, is a little thin, and only eked out to the necessary length by means as apparent as they are old-fashioned. Mr. E. C. Hedmondt made a dashing Prince, and proved his mastery also as an admirable vocalist. Nor would it be easy to overpraise the refinement, the graciousness, and the charm of Miss Decima Moore, equally fascinating as actress and as singer. Miss M. A. Victor excited uproarious laughter by her performance in an eccentric *pas de trois*, but for ourselves we admit that we find grounds rather for pity than for amusement in such exhibitions. A new comedian, Mr. Thomas Q. Seabrooke, clearly hailing from America, made something of a hit by his dry manner, and the remaining characters were in fairly capable hands.

The Fanatic.

A Play, in Four Acts, by John T. Day. Produced at the Strand Theatre, October 21.

Isaiah Baxter, M.P. .. Mr. Edmund Gurney	Lincoln B. Flagg .. ..Mr. Stuart Champion
Wilfred Lawson Baxter .. Mr. Charles Troode	Mrs. Baxter .. Miss Florence Fordyce
James Fanshawe, B.A. .. Mr. H. Nye Chart	Susan .. .. .. Miss Lena Benson
Douglas Stirling, M.D. .. Mr. J. H. Grahame	Matilda Maudsley .. Miss Kate Phillips
Sir Barbour McPherson.. Mr. Lesly Thomson	

So brief was the career of *The Fanatic* that it seems almost superfluous to linger over the production. The piece, nevertheless, possessed many points of interest, and had the author been capable of moulding his ideas into anything like dramatic shape, it is just possible the play might have enjoyed a greater measure of favour than was accorded it. Unfortunately, Mr. Day is still a novice in the art he has undertaken to illustrate, and while exhibiting a certain degree of rough ability, his work is much too crude and unsatisfactory to attract a captious public. In his play, he attempts to show the evil consequences which a spirit of fanaticism is prone to precipitate; but his method of pointing this excellent moral at no moment carries conviction with it. The first two acts of his piece are purely farcical, and the remainder, could they be taken seriously, essentially tragic. Earnest as the author evidently is, the audience, however, remains indifferent, or, if it be moved at all, it is to laughter rather than to tears. Isaiah Baxter, teetotaller, vegetarian, and ascetic, has

married a pretty young lady, Mary, whom he seeks to convert to his own views. Meanwhile, he becomes the victim of a scheming American, Lincoln B. Flagg, who successfully endeavours to interest him in a new beverage, supposed to be non-alcoholic, but which, in fact, is simply whisky masquerading under a spurious label. The result is that Baxter becomes more than ever confirmed in his teetotal principles, to the point of declaring, when his wife falls ill, that he would rather see her in her grave than allow her to drink the glass of wine ordered by her doctor. The doctor, it turns out, is an old lover of Mrs. Baxter's, and to save her from Baxter's intolerant harshness, he begs that she will run away with him. This she consents to do; but, happily, the catastrophe is averted by her uncle, a long-headed old Scotch distiller, who himself carries her off. The shock produced by the news that his wife has deserted him proves too much for Baxter, who falls dead from heart disease. The acting in this singular piece calls for no particular mention, although a word of praise may be spared to Mr. Edmund Gurney for his firm handling of the title-part.

The First Born.

A Chinese Play, in Two Acts, by Francis Powers. Produced at the Globe Theatre, November 1. (By arrangement with Mr. David Belasco.)

Loey Tsing	Miss May Buckley	Chan Wang	Mr. Francis Powers
Cho Pow	Miss Nellie Cummins	Hop Kee	Mr. J. H. Benrimo
Chan Lee	Miss Carrie E. Powers	Chan Toy	Miss Venie Wells
Doctor Pow Len ..	Mr. George Osbourne	Way Get	Mr. Joseph Silverstone

After six performances at the Globe, *The First Born* was abruptly withdrawn, and the company sent back to New York. The circumstance may be regarded as a sufficient criticism of the piece, in which the author displays far more regard for detail than for plot. As the result proved, however, the presence of half-a-dozen real Chinamen, chattering in their native language, is but poor compensation for the want of a dramatic story, and so *The First Born* failed to attract. The piece is in the main based upon the same original as *The Cat and the Cherub*, but is in every respect, except that of the richness of its accessories, altogether inferior to Mr. Fernald's version. The plots of the two plays are practically identical, the Lyric production, first introduced to the public, being, however, much more dramatic and stimulating. In view of these facts it is obviously superfluous to discuss further the merits or demerits of *The First Born*, the solitary remarkable feature of which was the really noteworthy acting of Miss May Buckley as Loey Tsing, a Bond Woman. Miss Buckley is an artist of the

greatest charm, tenderness, and sensibility, and it is earnestly to be hoped that no long period will elapse before she is again seen in London. Of *A Night Session*, a farce by Georges Feydeau, with which proceedings began, we prefer to say nothing. It is an amazing piece of ineptitude which, although it has won the approval of Mr. G. A. Redford, is likely to gain that of no one else.

Katherine and Petruchio.

A Revival of Garrick's Version, in One Act, of Shakspere's Comedy, "The Taming of the Shrew." Produced at Her Majesty's Theatre, November 1.

Petruchio .. .. Mr. Tree	Curtis .. .. Miss Frances Ivor
Baptista .. .. .. Mr. Charles G. Allan	Bianca .. .. Miss Margaret Halstan
Hortensio .. .. .. Mr. James B. Fagan	Katherine .. .. Mrs. Tree
Grumio .. .. .. Mr. Lionel Brough	

Let us say at once that we have nothing but condemnation for the truncated and preposterously farcical version given by Mr. Tree of Shakspere's comedy, *The Taming of the Shrew*. The thing is simply and exclusively a catchpenny production, of a description which we hoped had disappeared with the dark ages of the drama. If it suits Mr. Tree's purpose to tempt an unthinking public with such fare, by all means let him continue to do so; but, at the same time he should recognise the force of facts. In the circumstances, it would be idle to criticise his or any other performance in the revival. To do so would be to countenance a measure which is wholly undeserving of recognition.

IN THE PROVINCES.

From Sheffield, where we left him last month, Sir Henry Irving went to Hull, thence to Manchester, thence to Glasgow, and thence to Edinburgh, attracting full audiences in each place. Manchester no longer hesitates to endorse the general verdict respecting him. "Once more," the *Guardian* writes of a performance of *The Merchant of Venice*, "the commanding position that Sir Henry Irving has made for himself on the stage of the English-speaking world received the hearty recognition of a Manchester audience. Indeed, of his *Merchant of Venice* the lover of genuine drama may well say, 'Take it for all in all, I shall not look upon its like again.' Such a feast for eye and ear, for mind and heart, has not its match upon any dramatic stage of the present day, and the enthusiasm of the audience, which packed the theatre on Saturday evening to the utmost limits of its containing power, expressed no more than a due recognition of those

merits which mark out the presentation of Shakspere's greatest comedy as one of Henry Irving's greatest achievements." *Madame Sans-Gêne* was also warmly praised; and Sir Henry, in response to the inevitable call, quoted Charles Mathews' remark that Manchester people made the best comedy audience.

Madame Sans-Gêne was adversely criticised in Glasgow as a play, though the superlative merits of the performance met with due recognition. "There is something indscribably fascinating," the *Herald* says, "in Miss Terry's comedy. Her command of the strings that control the human feelings is unlimited, and she reaches them by an almost imperceptible touch. With Madame Sans-Gêne all is not unclouded gaiety and mirth—into her narrow world there occasionally enter distracting elements that cast, if only for a passing moment, dark shadows across her path, and in the delineation of these emotions, or in pleading with or cajoling the Emperor on behalf of others, she repeatedly showed by the effects she produced how closely our tears sometimes wait upon our smiles. In the scene in which she flouts the Queen of Naples, and taunts her with wearing a crown from which she had to wipe the blood by which it was won for her by others, she spoke with the fire of a soldier, and rose almost above her plebeian origin in the grandeur of her declamation. Her interview with the Emperor was a magnificent exhibition of the most delicate and suggestive phases of her art. Every movement and gesture, every look was aglow with significance, and when in the end she accomplished her purpose and had his majesty at her bidding, the house broke into ringing cheers which were again and again renewed. Of Sir Henry Irving's *Napoleon* little requires to be said. It is a subordinate character in the play, and Sir Henry is too able and experienced an artist to give it more than due prominence. Still, brief as it is, and so far as it goes, it is a wonderful example of his mastery over the art and the technicalities of the stage. By some strange device he seems to have taken a cubic from his stature, and we had the Little Corsican before us as he strutted and fumed about his palace in the flesh. The *North British Daily Mail* describes the audience at a performance of *The Merchant of Venice*, as one which "packed the theatre in a way we never remember to have seen it packed at a *matinée*."

Edinburgh was no less appreciative. "An actor," says the *Scotsman*, "is sometimes apt to take an exaggerated view of the particular piece in which he is interested, but there will be a general consensus of opinion as to the correctness of Sir Henry's description of Sardou's play. It is not a comedy with an exciting

plot; it belongs rather to that type of play in which we have a dramatic presentation of interesting incident, and it would be difficult to recall more vivid, stirring, and picturesque stage suggestion of the excitement of Paris at the Revolution than what is given in the prologue, or a more concentrated picture of the domestic and Court life of Napoleon than is presented in the subsequent three acts. But the prologue and succeeding acts are not detached tableaux. They have been skilfully woven together by the dramatist, whose dialogue, always crisp and interesting, is at parts humorous, and again rises to an elevation and loftiness of thought and expression which rivets attention. The play may be said to be dominated by the womanly virtues of "Sans Gêne," and the other characters, Napoleon, Fouché, Lefebvre, and the rest, are also limned with a master hand. Action and incident move together so smoothly, and the balance of all the parts is so well preserved, that not one moment of the representation is dull or uninteresting. This is to a large extent Miss Terry's play. She is on the stage almost without a break during the prologue and three acts, and grandly does she bear her part in the fascinating scenes in which she so prominently figures."

IN PARIS.

The chief event of the past month has been the production at the Français of *Tristan de Léonois*, a new piece, in three acts and seven tableaux, and in verse, by M. Armand Silvestre. The author of *Griseldis and Tzèyl* has again borrowed his subject from the age of legend. Tristan de Léonois is no other than the familiar Arthurian hero Trystram, the central figure of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, and a personage who has found favour among many other poets before Silvestre. The present adaptation of the legend begins with the shipwrecked Tristan (Albert Lambert) at the court of the Irish King Argius (Jacques Fenoux), and the awakening of Iseult's (Bartet) love for the mysterious stranger. The arrival of King Mark's ambassadors to claim her hand for the Breton monarch and her departure are a masterpiece of *mise-en-scène*. The scene of King Mark's (Paul Mounet) discovery of his unfaithful wife and the treason of his friend, though crude and noisy, is always effective. Tristan's redemption by his bravery in the last act, and the end, are according to the canons of love unto death. The verse of Silvestre is always good, the acting at the

Français is always excellent, and no piece is staged there in a paltry spirit. But the subject is too well-known, and in verse, and the public feels that in places the piece suffers from that dramatic weakness for which the beauty of the verse seems often to serve as an apology.

Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont, a comedy in four acts, by M. Brieux, has attracted large audiences at the Gymnase. This is a play full of talent and vivacity, and is considered by some of the ablest critics to be the masterpiece of the author. If it was not applauded throughout it was because the scenes laid so powerfully before the spectators were often painful and saddening. The "Woman's Question," which seems now to monopolise the stage under various aspects, here is reduced to an apparent hopelessness; there is no solution offered in *Les Trois Filles*, all is depressing, even disheartening. Each of the three daughters of M. Dupont follows a separate career. Angèle, the eldest, has disappeared from her home eighteen years already when the first scene opens. She had lost her good name, and her father had refused to pardon or assist her, and sent her from his door. There was but one profession left to her, the most shameful, and that she had adopted, and was heard of no more. Caroline, ugly, unattractive, stupid, appears before us as the most unpleasing type of the "old maid," soured by a dull life of so-called "respectability," the butt of her father, who sneers at the narrow form of religion which she has embraced as her only consolation. Then comes Julie, the sentimental beauty, the sole hope of the Duponts. She is to be married, but she is not in love with the man her father has selected for her husband; indeed she is chiefly in love with herself, and bitten with some shallow ideas of woman's supremacy. Not a hopeful or encouraging trio, these three daughters! The second act ends with the final arrangements for Julie's marriage between the bourgeois M. Dupont, and the father of Antoine, equally bourgeois. In the third act we at last are introduced to Angèle. No relenting on her parents' part has recalled her to the home she has disgraced. No; but an affair of money. An inheritance is in question, and her signature is needed, so the prodigal is to return. M. Dupont debates with his wife how she is to be received. His embarrassment, his hesitation, and the scene between him and Angèle when she arrives, are the best points in the play. It is very touching, this meeting between the lost sister and her family. Angèle is sad, weary, disillusioned, by no means a prosperous evil-doer, and all are gentle to her except the rigid Caroline. There is some "sweetness and light" in this act,

but in the final one all is gloom. Julie's marriage is a failure; no love on either side, rebellion on her part, brutality on her husband's! Might we suggest as a welcome change that the husband of the "Féministe" wife need not always be represented on the stage as an unqualified brute? We are getting tired of him. Worst of all, no children! for Julie adores children, and had hoped for a mother's happiness. Her husband ridicules her feelings. Are there really such husbands? The three sisters are united once more, drawn together by their miseries. Caroline, bitter and despairing, cries that religion is of no avail. "Follow Angèle, if you are unhappy with your husband!" And Angèle shows, with much pathos, the misery of the woman who has fallen. "No! any life sooner than mine; you will be better under the *yoke* of your husband!" Julie listens sullenly, and resolves to remain with her husband, and console herself as other faithless wives of faithless husbands do. This act seems to sadden the house, and is nearly always received in silence. Yet the play continues to be popular, and deservedly so. M. Léraud, as Dupont, is finished and skilful in the highest degree. Mlle. Dulae triumphed over the difficult rôle of Julie. Mlle. Caron was wonderful in her representation of the despised Caroline, and Mlle. Mégard very touching and pathetic as Angèle.

Yalouse, a three-act comedy by M. A. Bisson, at the Vaudeville, we might recommend as an antidote to the gloomy influences of M. Brieux' play, for *Yalouse* is full of merriment from beginning to end (with no impropriety either, a change which is to be encouraged). Germaine Moreuil is the typical jealous wife; she has a devoted husband, Lucien, and a delightful home. She makes Lucien's life a burden with her suspicions, and at last these are so evident that the very servants laugh at them downstairs, and even turn her jealousy to account. They want an evening to themselves, and they know that if they can provoke a quarrel between their master and mistress, the end will be that Germaine and Lucien will retire to their rooms and lock themselves in, each to sulk alone. François, the valet, and Julie, the maid, lay their plot. They spill scent over their master's coat, and put one of Julie's blonde hairs on the collar. Germaine's eyes, ever on the look-out for offence, detects the hair, and she accuses her husband. He shrugs his shoulders, he knows nothing about it. And this scent? Lucien gets angry, and the quarrel rises to a height. In their rage they suddenly perceive they are not alone; a visitor has entered and stands silent. It is M. du Failles. M. du Failles is the most amusing character in the play, by his very solemnity. Tall, thin, austere, the father of a beauti-

ful daughter, with whom Germaine's brother Ludovic is hopelessly in love, M. du Failles is very particular about his daughter; she shall only marry into a united and happy family. "Go and see my sister and Lucien!" says Ludovic; "they are a model pair." And here is M. du Failles, and this is the moment he has chosen, or that Fate has chosen. Ludovic and Mlle. du Failles are behind him; they hear the quarrel in despair, and M. du Failles, still solemn, leads them away in silence. This is really comic. Then comes a funnier scene still. Germaine and Lucien will be divorced! They fly to M. et Mme. Brunais, parents of Germaine. The excellent Brunais think they will cure this quarrelsome couple by pretending to quarrel themselves, and so disgust them. Very amusing are the pretended disagreements of the affectionate old pair, and the astonishment of the young ones; but, more amusing still, they really get angry at last, and Mme. Brunais gives her husband a box on the ear. And (but of course we expected it) there at the door is M. du Failles, his daughter, and Ludovic! "Have you any more relations to introduce me to? says he to Ludovic. He leads them away again. Of course all ends in a general "kiss and make friends," and for the last time appears M. du Failles. MM. Noblet, Torin and Pental, also M. Boisselat, played with great wit. Mlle. Yahne as Germaine, and Mme. Daynes-Grassot as Mme. Brunais, both deserve much praise.

IN BERLIN.

At the Royal Schauspiel-Haus we have a domestic comedy by Herren F. von Schönthan and Koppel-Ellfeld, entitled *Helga's Hochzeit*. The simple and poetic story which it tells is well suited to its eighteenth-century setting, though the authors have not been over careful in guarding against anachronisms in the choice of words put into the mouths of some of the characters. It is the story of a loveless wedding and its inevitable consequence, but as husband and wife are about to part, the latter to enter a convent, belated Cupid comes to them. His tardy arrival, however, furnishes complications sufficient to fill out the three acts with the normal amount of incident. Fräulein Hausner made an originally lovable heroine absolutely bewitching, and Herren Matonsky and Vollmer, as Helga's husband and father respectively, stood out among an unsually efficient company.

In *Hans Huckebein*, a three-act piece by Herren Blumenthal and Kadelburg, produced at the Lessing, is seen a typical German

farce. The hero is dubbed "Hans Huckebein" because of the perpetual ill-fortune that seems to dog his footsteps in the matter of small scrapes. If he goes up to bed at six in the morning with his boots in his hands he is bound to be seen, and if he then puts the bedroom clock back a couple of hours he finds that his wife is wide awake and watching him. But Hans has a father-in-law, and their mutual inclination towards the same form of amusement leads them one evening to go out together. But this part of the story is not, in view of the relationship between the two men, very savoury. Next we pass to a visit paid by the two ladies under the escort of the hapless Hans to a kinetoscope display. Now. Hans had lately been absorbing ozone at Ostend, and "picture No. 6" represents the seashore of that watering place at moonlight, with a figure unmistakable to the two ladies in the act of embracing a fair syren. The wife resolves upon a divorce, consequently "No. 6" becomes notorious, and Hans has to part with a large sum to induce the proprietor of the picture to let him have it. But "No. 6" has wrecked the happiness of another household. A prize-fighter has recognised the female figure, and vows to take a terrible vengeance upon the man who has enjoyed the smiles of his wife. He has just discovered the object of his search when his wife enters, and, seizing the situation in an instant, informs her belligerent husband that she was engaged by the kinetoscope manager to "sit" for comic pictures. This satisfies all parties, and everything ends happily. The piece was capitally acted throughout, Herr Schönfeld being particularly successful as Hans, though giving, unavoidably perhaps, an impresssion of a brother to *The Private Secretary*, whose intentions and tendencies are the very reverse of those of the Rev. Robert Spalding.

Jugendfreunde, the new play by Herr Fulda, is quite in the author's best form. Such light and healthy and dainty comedy as Herr Fulda's is not too common in Berlin, and it is pleasant to be able to record, therefore, that the piece was instantaneously successful. It is the story of four bachelors vowed ever to remain as they are, and of the gradual succumbing of all four. Three of them get married, and the fourth—the central figure—engages a lady shorthand writer. The bachelor invites his three friends and their wives to spend an evening at his house. They come, but the wives—three admirably differentiated characters—quickly fall out, after speculating upon the relations between their host and his shorthand-writer. The scandal thus set afloat reaches the ears of the lady most concerned, who, though at first a feminist

of the most irreconcilable description, begins to think that, perhaps after all, it would be better to get married. The bachelor, who of course has heard no whisper of the matter, finally comes to the conclusion that he must do the same as his friends, in spite of the inelegant exhibition between the three ladies on the previous day. The sketch is very slight, but gives excellent opportunities for the portrayal of eight unusually natural characters. Herr Nissen as the bachelor who died so hard, and Fräulein Eberty were perhaps the best of an exceptionally good cast.

The Sign of the Cross has been produced at the Friedrich Wilhelm Statisches Theater, but the many eliminations and "improvements" which the play has suffered in being adapted, have given it a tone very different from the play as England knows it, and quite accounts for its unmitigated failure. An almost literal translation is necessary if the piece is to obtain the reception due to it. Of the garbled version itself and the very mediocre players, it will be better to say nothing.

IN VIENNA.

Die Goldtante, by Herr Costa, is a light comedy which was originally written for a provincial touring company, and was scarcely intended to come under the critical gaze of a large city. It has, however, found its way to the Theater an der Wien, and the excellent reception which it has there met shows that the author has conceived a much too modest estimate of the good qualities of the little work. Herr Bärwinkel, a merchant, is the central figure of the comedy. He requires 30,000 florins to save him from bankruptcy. At about the same time as this unpleasant fact comes home to him Herr Wollmann, a wealthy land proprietor whose son is engaged to Bärwinkel's daughter, turns against him, and his own wife expresses a wish to leave him because he can no longer gratify her extravagant tastes. His financial difficulty is, however, relieved by the receipt of the required sum from Max Römer, a young painter who is engaged to his daughter, and who has raised the money by selling a valuable picture. Römer hesitates to remit the money in his own name, and eventually sends it as a present from "Aunt Rieke of Pirna," a relative whom Bärwinkel looked upon as dead. The idea then occurs to Bärwinkel of sending his daughter to his newly-discovered aunt—the "goldaunt," as she is then called—in order that she may not witness the apparently inevitable separation of

her parents. This resolve puts the lovers into a high state of alarm, but they find ready aid in Römer's fellow-painter, Karl Schwirbel, who has already done them the service of effecting the sale of the picture, and, attired as an American, conveying the money to Bärwinkel. Schwirbel appears as "Aunt Rieke from Pirna," reconciles man and wife, and brings about the union of the two younger people.

Herren Blumenthal and Kadelburg belong to that class of writers for the stage who believe that real life can be relied upon to supply as bold and as striking romances as the most subtle of imaginations. Thus their latest comedy, *Hans Huckebein*, is very much of the nature of an interesting item of news, elaborated into the form of scenes and then cut up into acts. The subject of the laughable production is an unfortunate flirtation which a certain gentleman was drawn into while spending a summer holiday at Ostend. From this adventure spring all sorts of embarrassments, and the innocent medium of their accomplishment is the latest invention in the way of scientific entertainment. While Herr Martin Hallerstaedt is engaged in close conversation with a lady in a public garden it happens that the proprietor of a cinematographe adds the scene of which the pair form a prominent part to his collection. The subsequent exhibition of the photograph at a theatre at which Frau Hallerstaedt and some members of her family are present is only what was to be expected for the purposes of the plot. The indiscreet husband, when he is allowed an interval in which to exculpate himself, makes rather a poor exhibition of his ingenuity, and comes a serious cropper by declaring the scene depicted took place long before he was married, forgetting for the moment that, while he has been married more than four years, the cinematographe has barely been in existence for two. To add to the trouble, the husband of the other party in the unfortunate *tête-à-tête* makes his appearance on dire vengeance intent, and matters generally are looking extremely uncomfortable for Herr Hallerstaedt, when the lady who has been the cause of it all relieves the tension by informing her husband that before they were married, which event was quite recent, she was employed by the proprietor of the cinematographe to enter into vivacious conversation with gentlemen in order to provide amusing incidents in his pictures. The representation of the new work was, inasmuch as it was produced at the Deutsche Volkstheater, excellently carried out, and the production must be written down an all-round success.

The Geisha has been as well received here as it is in London. It appeared, of course, in a German guise, but every effort was

made to follow its English original as closely as possible. It was produced on the stage of the Carl Theater, and Fräu. Stojan as Molly Seymour aroused the enthusiasm of her audience and became the recipient of an embarrassingly large number of tributes of esteem.

IN ITALIAN CITIES.

Il Voto, a new opera by Signor Giordano, the composer of *Andrea Chenier*, has been produced with fair success at the Lirico Internazionale, Milan. The opera contains some pleasing melodies, but its chief characteristics are the intensity of the passion to which some passages rise, and the picturesqueness of its chief situations. *Il Sogno di un Mattino di Primavera*, a drama by Signor Gabriele D'Annunzio, was performed recently at the Rossini Theatre, Florence, for the first time in Italy. As a literary work the drama ranks high, but when one seeks to place it according to the merit of its subject-matter, the only position which it will take up at all easily is with the nightmares —and the most lugubrious of them. From beginning to end it is creepy and uncanny. The scene is laid at a villa in Tuscany where resides Donna Isabella in the oblivion of madness. That oblivion covers a tragic passage in her life, in which her husband killed a lover in her arms, and she spent the night supporting the blood-covered body. In the morning her reason was gone, and in the time which had since elapsed, if ever it returned for a brief interval, it only brought back that one horrifying scene. Indeed, it was found necessary to keep everything of a red colour from her view, as her disordered mind immediately saw such articles as pools and clots of blood. While she is still in this state, Virginio, a brother of the murdered lover, who himself had entertained in secret a tenderness for Isabella, arrives at the villa in the hope that his presence may give her malady a turn towards convalescence. At first the mad woman takes him for her sister's husband, for whom she is making a wreath of flowers, but when he speaks his voice recalls to her that of his dead brother, and she starts up under the shock with her mind gone beyond all hope. With Signora Duse as Isabella, it is almost superfluous to say, the tragic story was well received. It was subsequently played at Milan with equal success.

IN MADRID.

With regard to a new production at the Teatro Eslava, the position of affairs is neatly put by one of the Spanish critics. "A

good deal more," he writes, "has been said about *Los Rancheros* than about the battle of Lérida, and, after all, the first appearance of the play came to much the same result as the battle, with the important difference that the position is reversed. The battle was lost and ought not to have been. *Los Rancheros* was saved, &c." Despite this somewhat severe implication, nobody who was present at the performance would deny that the audience showed manifestations of approval throughout. It was to be remarked, however, that these were almost solely aroused by the occasional witticisms which the farce undoubtedly contains. These ebullitions proceed from the mouths of two rollicking farmers, who, indeed, in the absence of any traceable plot, form the one feature of the farce which has saved it from directly following the precedent of the battle of Lerida. A dolorous duty demands also the condemnation of *El Guardia de Corps*, a similar work meeting with a similar reception. It is poor from beginning to end, both in its libretto and its music. *Honra y Vida*, a one-act drama by Señor Joaquin Dicenta, which appeared some years ago with brilliant success at Saragossa, but has not before been seen in Madrid, has been produced at the Teatro Martin. The result was to give the opinion of the provincial audience the stamp of Madrid approval. Briefly put, the plot lays bare the dark designs of Don Pedro de Castilla, the Spanish monarch, who, having fallen in love with the wife of a certain valiant and upright Count, causes the nobleman to leave his castle on a false errand in order that he may visit the lady without danger. The Count returns to his castle unexpectedly to wish his wife good-bye, and discovers her and the King together. The situation is a difficult one for a loyal subject, and the Count, preferring to turn his arms against his faithless wife than against his sovereign, stabs the lady, and, throwing her dead body into the king's arms, exclaims, "There, you have her; she is yours!" Although the drama in itself is a fine work, some credit for the great success achieved must be accorded Señorita Santoncha and Señores Riveiles and Rodriguez, who played the leading parts with admirable appreciation.

IN NEW YORK.

Miss Madeleine Lucette Ryley's new play, *The American Citizen*, written expressly for Mr. Nat Goodwin, and heralded by glowing notices of its success elsewhere, has been received with great enthusiasm at the Knickerbocker. The authoress of

Christopher Junior, known in England as *Jedbury Junior*, has made another addition to her list of almost faultless little plays. To describe its plot would be to handle the web of the silver spider ; the play must be seen, not touched. Mr. Nat Goodwin revelled in a part that no other actor could play, Miss Maxine Elliott making a capital foil in the way of genteel comedy. At the Fourteenth Street Theatre, *Cumberland '61*, the latest melodrama by Mr. Franklin Fyles, is enjoying a long season of popularity. It is a Romeo and Juliet story with a happy ending, and a background of the Civil War, with clean-cut characters, crisp dialogue and above all, well constructed. If the management had been at the pains to secure really capable players for the leading parts nothing would be wanting. *La Poupée* has been received with unequivocal signs of favour, and Anna Held, who had already won over American audiences by previous visits to New York, has scored a great success in this their first opportunity of seeing her in comic opera. At the Broadway Mr. Frank Daniels seems to have made a hit in *The Idol's Eye*, a very second-rate comic opera by Mr. Harry B. Smith and Mr. Victor Herbert. One of the scenes representing an Indian temple is very imposing. Klondike has already reached the stage, albeit only the Star Theatre as yet. *The Heart of the Klondike* tells in real melodramatic fashion a story of twenty years ago, when the riches of that wonderful region were known only to a few. Mr. Scott Marble is the author, and has been very successful in providing meat suited to the palates of Star Theatre audiences. Mrs. Frances Hodgson's Burnett's novel, *A Lady of Quality*, dramatised by herself and Mr. Stephen Townsend, has been produced at Wallack's Theatre, with Miss Julia Arthur as Clorinda. The play is fairly well constructed, though the authors have evidently laboured to give as much as possible of the novel within the time limits of an evening's performance. The drama would perhaps be strengthened if the leading incidents were accentuated, and the minor ones, together with the characters belonging to them, eliminated altogether. The character of Clorinda has been softened down from what it is in the novel, and this process is further developed by the sweet and touching performance of Miss Julia Arthur, who herewith makes her first appearance as a "star." Mr. Edwin Arden was a perfect Sir John, and Mr. Stephen Townsend, the part-author of the adaptation, gave a life-like embodiment of the proud Dunstanwolde. The cast was of a high level of excellence. The Dumas-Grundy play, *A Marriage of Convenience*, has been received with qualified favour at Wallack's. There is hardly enough action

in the play to interest American audiences, and Mr. Grundy's dialogue is by no means the best he has given the world. Any success that the play may achieve will be due to Mr. John Drew's impersonation of the Comte de Caudale, which was replete with dignity, power, wit, and courtliness. He has seldom been seen to better advantage. *Miss Francis of Yale* has been produced here with better results, it seems, than was its fate in London a little while back. Mr. Etienne Girardot in the leading *rôle* was genuinely funny. Mr. E. S. Willard has reappeared in *The Professor's Love Story*, *The Middleman*, and *The Rogue's Comedy*, in each of which he seems even to have bettered his former performances, especially in the last-named, where he has learnt to glide over one or two little inconsistencies of the character of Bailey Prothero which were only too noticeable upon its first presentation.

Echoes from the Green Room.

Sir Henry Irving was to have appeared at Newcastle-on-Tyne on the 22nd of November, but was unfortunately compelled, by a loss of voice, to take a week's rest at Edinburgh. He expects, however, to be able to fulfil his engagement at Liverpool towards the end of the month.

While on tour the Lyceum company have been rehearsing Mr. Laurence Irving's *Peter the Great*, a forecast of which appeared in our September issue, and which may be looked for at the Lyceum in a few weeks.

Our passage in the recent biography of Lord Tennyson, reviewed in these pages last month, is calculated to create a wrong impression, of course without any intention on the part of the author to do so. The Lyceum *Becket* is spoken of as "adapted by Irving." In point of fact, as we stated some months back, Sir Henry Irving, seeing in the rather undramatic original the possibility of an effective acting tragedy, suggested a variety of alterations in it to the poet, who adopted them all.

Sir Henry Irving, at a supper given in his honour last month at the Arts' Club, Manchester, related an anecdote or two. Chatting with the poet soon after he had become a peer, the actor said to him, "Look here, Tennyson, I can't call you Lord. Said Tennyson, "I can't help it, I only did it for the sake of the boy." "I rather think," Sir Henry added, "that this anecdote will not be found in the recently published life of Lord Tennyson."

The *Evening News* of Glasgow publishes some early recollections of Sir Henry Irving in that city. First appearing there thirty-seven years ago, he was announced in the bill by Mr. Edmund Glover, the manager of the old Theatre Royal, as "Mr. Irwin." Sir Henry says :—"When I came to Glasgow to attend the rehearsals of *The Indian Revolt*, I was surprised and indignant to find myself cast for some character in *The Warlock of the Glen*, which was to be played as a Saturday night attraction prior to the *Revolt* on Monday. As I had made my mark as an actor in Dublin, where I had been a great favourite, you can imagine what I felt when I found myself announced merely as a Mr. Irwin—they couldn't even spell my name correctly. But I played the part nevertheless."

Some time in January we may look for Mr. Pinero's new comedy at the Court Theatre, the scene of so many of his earlier triumphs. *The Vagabond King* will give place to a revival of the *Children of the King* some little time before Christmas, and after the holidays the Pinero piece will be produced. It is a farcical comedy of forty years back, more in the vein of the old Court plays—*The Magistrate*, *Dandy Dick*, *The Cabinet Minister*, and the rest—than in the style of his more recent works. Always on the look-out for talent, Mr. Pinero has selected Miss Irene Vanbrugh for what is described as the principal character, though the chief parts are really one almost as good as the other. Miss Hilda Spong, Mr. E. M. Robson, and Mr. Fred Thorne will also be in the cast.

Mr. Wilson Barrett arrived last month in New York, en route to Australia, where he will play twenty weeks. He remained in town only a day, departing on the morrow for San Francisco. He expects to control theatres in New York and in Boston, and to go on tour in America next season.

The reputation of English acting continues to be upheld in America by Mr. Willard, who has achieved another distinct success as Tom Pinch in an adaptation of *Martin Chuzzlewit.*

Mr. Willard has purchased *All for Her*, which he wishes to revive during his present American tour. His Hugh Trevor ought to be a superb performance.

In January we are to have *Julius Cæsar* at Her Majesty's, with Mr. Tree as Mark Antony, Mr. Louis Calvert in the name-part, and Mr. Lewis Waller as Brutus. Mr. Calvert, it is understood, has largely aided his manager in the preparations for the revival.

More honours for music: the brothers de Reszke have been ennobled, by the Tsar, and the Queen has conferred upon Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Principal of the Royal Academy of Music, the medal struck in commemoration of the sixtieth year of her reign.

Mme. Melba's first appearance in public was made in peculiar circumstances. "I was quite a young girl in Australia," she tells us, "when, notwithstanding the persistent discouragement of my father, who was averse to the idea of a singer's career for me, I engaged a hall, and sent round a notice to all my friends, saying that I proposed to give an entertainment which I hoped they would patronise. However, unfortunately for me somebody mentioned the little scheme to my father, who, furious at my clandestine enterprise, begged everyone of his acquaintances to uphold his parental authority by ignoring the performance. But even then I was not disheartened, and when the day came I drove off to the hall, and at the hour announced for the commencement of my concert stepped on to the platform—to find myself face to face with an audience of two. And nobody else came."

Mme. Nordica, who, as we briefly stated last month, arrived in New York in October, and who has quite recovered from her recent illness, will remain in the United States until March, but will not appear in Opera. In Paris she met Mme. Melba, apparently in the best of health.

When Mr. Hare opens at the Globe this month, he will probably begin with *A Bachelor's Romance*, which has already met with some success in America. It is written by Miss Morton, the author of *The Sleeping Partner*, which was seen recently at the Criterion, and is, like many successful plays in these times, an adaptation from a novel. It is just possible that the principal part after that of the old bachelor to be played by Mr. Hare will be entrusted to Miss Mary Jerrold, the young actress who made so successful a *début* in *Mary Pennington, Spinster.*

The White Heather has been doing so remarkably well at Drury Lane that attempts were made to secure a house where the run could be continued when pantomime time comes round. But these, unfortunately, failed, and it will, therefore, be seen no more for the present after about the middle of this month. Mr. Robert Loraine's clever acting as the scapegrace Dick (why is it that all stage scapegraces are called Dick?) has brought his many offers of engagements, and he bids fair to take a front place before long among our young "romantic" actors. To win so much favour at twenty-one is not given to many.

It is amusing to hear that so many stockbrokers have a fancy for "walking on" in the Stock Exchange scene in *The White Heather*, and some just go for once, in order, we suppose, to see what it feels like to be a shilling-a-night "super," but others are regular in their attendance ; and a special dressing-room at the theatre was set apart for members of the "House."

Mr. and Mrs. Kendal's last appearance in London was at the Garrick Theatre. Their next will be at the house with which their names are so long and so happily associated—the St. James's. When Mr. Alexander vacates it during the autumn next year, they will become temporary proprietors, and introduce to London playgoers some of the pieces they have been successful with in the country.

Madame Modjeska thinks of reappearing in her native country. "I shall never leave America," she says, "unless I hold in my hand the permission from the Russian Government My losses were very heavy the last time on account of a refusal to allow me to play in Warsaw. Of course, I can appear in Austrian Poland, but it would scarcely be worth my while unless I could go to the larger cities. It is possible that the feeling created by my speech during the World's Fair has been dispelled by this time. It was not against the Emperor that I spoke, but the officials who perpetrated such cruelties against the men and women of my country. At any rate, I mean to apply for permission to play at Warsaw."

By arrangement with Sir Henry Irving, Mr. Forbes Robertson's season at the Lyceum will be extended to December 18.

The City Fathers of three centuries ago or less must again be stirring uneasily in their graves. *The Tempest* was played by the Elizabethan Stage Society on November 5 in the stately Egyptian Hall of the Mansion House, "with the original songs and the instrumental pieces performed upon the original instruments of Shakspere's time." The performance was necessarily amateurish, but had many points of excellence.

The better understanding that now subsists between the Church and the Stage has again been shown at Canterbury. In accordance with a suggestion made by the late Archbishop Benson, Dean Farrar last month got up a performance at the hall in St. Margaret's-street, of the Rev. Henry Cresswell's *Conversion of England*, "the only ecclesiastical play written and acted under the direction of the English Church since the mediæval Mysteries." The characters, we are told, were "acted by divers persons, both clergy and laymen, engaged in the Church's work."

In the Christmas number of the *Illustrated English Magazine* we have an admirable article on Miss Ellen Terry by Mr. Austin Brereton. It is liberally illustrated with portraits, especially of the actress as she appeared in her early life.

Mr. Henry Arthur Jones's paper on "The Drama and Real Life," read at Toynbee Hall to a large and attentive gathering on November 13, contained much that was true, though nothing particularly new. The theatre, Mr. Jones pointed out, could not offer an exact picture of real life. Plays could reflect the great permanent realities of human nature, but not "passing and casual occurrences," or small and arid facts." The limitations which hedge round the playwright's art were pathetically recited, and perhaps made a little too much of. We all learnt in the nursery that it is the bad workman who quarrels with his tools, and Mr. Jones is too good at his craft to lay himself open to the suspicion of finding petulant fault with the conditions that govern his art. After all, the artist may to a

great extent, if he be magician enough to enthrall his public, create his own conditions, and not even the necessity of "nailing characters together on a plank some 25 ft. square" need cause despair.

THE best of the advice Mr. Jones had to offer came at the end, when he declared that, although the dramatist could not give all nature gave, yet he must not on that occasion present a false or a careless picture. "The dramatist should give an illusion of real life, and the art of creating that illusion is the art of the dramatist." Some of the *obiter dicta* of Mr. Jones on "Real Life" were a little surprising—his assertion, for instance, that "real life is not full of remarkable coincidences." Are we, then, to put away the familiar *cliché* that fact is stranger than fiction? Again, must we take very literally the remark that "in thirty years life has never offered me one single scene which could be put upon the stage?" Scenes that could be transferred without alteration to the boards are not common (though there are such), but suggestions and hints for effective play-writing surely abound.

AFTER much needless dissension, the movement for erecting a memorial to Sir Augustus Harris has taken a definite direction. Early in November, the then Lord Mayor, Sir George Faudel-Phillips, unveiled an elaborate drinking fountain, erected at the north corner of Drury-lane Theatre, in honour of the late actor-manager, a bust of whom it includes. One portion of the money subscribed for the memorial was devoted to the endowment of a bed at Charing-cross Hospital, and another to the endowment of a cot at the Victoria Hospital for Children.

THE "educational value of the drama" theory is really "looking up." The hiring of the Lyceum Theatre as a whole the other night so that 2000 students at the Day Training College, Moorfields, might study *Hamlet* (in view of an examination next year of which the play will form a special subject) is a step in the right direction at any rate. It was certainly appreciated by the students, and Professor Cusack, who made the arrangements for their visit, deserves credit for an original idea boldly carried out. We shall look, when Mr. Arthur Roberts is back at the Prince of Wales's with *Dandy Dan the Lifeguardsman*, for an announcement that "the theatre will be closed to the general public on Saturday evening, for a performance to be given for the special benefit of the noblemen and gentlemen attending Eton College and Harrow School, who will be examined in the play when they return to their studies."

BEFORE Mr. Edward Terry resumes management at his own theatre early next year, ready to score successes, if he can, with Mr. Stuart Ogilvie's *White Knight* and Messrs. Darnley and Bruce's *Shadows on the Blind*, it will be given over to a Christmas entertainment. Last Christmas, it will be remembered, *The Holly Tree Inn* delighted all children of all ages. This year the principal attraction that will be relied on is a version of Hans Andersen's pretty tale of the Tin Soldier and the Tinder Box. Mr. Stuart Ogilve's title, by the way, sounds as if he takes *his* subject from *Alice in Wonderland*.

THE plans for Mr. Wyndham's new theatre in St. Martin's-court have been passed by the London County Council, and the work of building will now be pushed on as quickly as may be. The house will hold some 800 persons—to be exact 829—as the seating arrangements stand at present. It will thus be of about the same size as the Criterion. Another "flitting" to take place before long will be Mr. Penley's from the Globe to the

Novelty Theatre. The latter has never had much luck since it was opened not very much longer than a decade ago, and of late has lost its place as a west-end theatre altogether. Mr. Wyndham's theatre will be in the heart of a quarter full of literary and artistic memories and associations. It is said that Ben Jonson went to school in St. Martin's-court before he was entered at Westminster, and later on it was inhabited by many famous painters—among them Hogarth and Wilkie. There was a noted beef-shop there, too, to which a chance reference of Zoffany has lent abiding fame.

Mr. Bernard Shaw, it would seem, is unable to forget the criticisms in New York on *Arms and the Man*. He describes certain writers there as "a flock of ganders, including one flattering goose."

Everyone is asking who is the Quarterly Reviewer to whom belongs the distinction of "discovering" Mr. W. S. Gilbert as a poet? The *Quarterly* article has attracted naturally the widest attention. To find Mr. Gilbert compared to Aristophanes, to Herrick, to Swift, and to Tennyson, was a surprise indeed; and probably no one was more astonished than Mr. Gilbert himself, unless, as some wag has suggested, he wrote the article himself by way of a joke. The "charmingly simple ballad from *Patience*," the "elegiac duet" from *The Gondoliers*, and various other pieces very amusing in their way are selected for what *Literature* calls "gushing panegyric," and the writer in his misguided enthusiasm almost gives the impression that he is bent on making Mr. Gilbert ridiculous. To Mr. Gilbert's merits, we are certainly not blind—we are inclined even to rate them more highly than most people—but Mr. Gilbert taken seriously as a poet! We can only fall back upon quotation, and cry with Mr. R. G. Knowles, "Tableau! Vivant! There's a picture for you."

Mr. Joseph Knight's life of Mrs. Siddons, in the latest volume of the Dictionary of National Biography, is one of the most interesting of the many excellent contributions of the writer to this monumental work There is little or nothing new in it—the time has gone for fresh light to be thrown either on Mrs. Siddons's private life, or upon her acting; but it arranges skilfully the cream of the material he had to choose from, and gives a readable, as well as a complete sketch of the actress's career. If fault had to be found, we should say that Mr. Knight takes rather too hard a view of her failings—her keenness in money matters, her occasional jealousies, and her fondness for composing and reciting atrociously bad verses.

Judge Bacon, of the Bloomsbury County Court, evidently does not aim at being thought so simple and so little versed in matters theatrical as the dignitary upon the Bench who once blandly asked the famous question "who is Connie Gilchrist?" The other day he had Mr. Willie Edouin before him on a judgment summons. The comedian explained that he was unable to pay his debts in full at present, but made an offer of £5 a month. The solicitor engaged on the opposite side at once pointed out that with a £45 a-week salary and proprietary rights in certain plays, he ought to do more than this. "Ah!" said the judge, "but you forget he lost money over *Newmarket*, that was not a success." "No," ejaculated poor Mr. Edouin, "I lost £700 over it;" and in the end his offer was taken. Judge Bacon evidently follows the fortunes of plays with some interest. In this case his knowledge came in very usefully.

"In Glasgow the other afternoon," we are told, "Miss Ellen Terry might have been seen leisurely carrying through the streets a picture which she had under her arm, without any wrapping. The sight naturally attracted

attention on the part of passers-by, the streets being busy with promenaders at the time. The picture was one by Orchardson, which she had lifted from a picture-dealer's gallery, telling him she would return it at the end of the week, but that she must have something in her rooms as an antidote to 'your horrid Glasgow gloom.'"

Mr. Austin Brereton may be well congratulated upon the success of his efforts as honorary secretary of the dramatic section of the Victorian Era Exhibition, which extended from May to the end of October. That success was conspicuous enough to excite a spirit of emulation elsewhere. It has just been decided that the Italian national at Turin next year shall have a somewhat similar feature, but on a larger scale. A section devoted to the native theatre will illustrate the development of the drama from the earliest times to the present. A series of performances that will describe this growth will be given, the best Italian actors and authors having promised their co-operation.

Mrs. Kendal is able to recognise facts. "I am sufficient of an artist," she says, "to see that I cannot go on playing the young girl's part which I have taken for many years. I know that I ought to have characters more suitable to my age. In *The Elder Miss Blossom* I play a sort of old maid, who, while still capable of falling in love, meets an old bachelor, and, of course, falls in love with him. It shows that the love of middle-aged people can be even deeper in intensity than the love of young men and women. It ends just a little bit tearfully, for the elder Miss Blossom does not marry the bachelor after all. Mr. Kendal has an excellent part—that of the middle-aged bachelor, who is an anthropologist."

The methods of Bayreuth are, it seems, to be boldly transplanted to London next year. Mr. Schultz-Curtius, the well-known Wagnerian *entrepreneur*, proposes to give the Niebelungen Ring cycle of operas at Covent Garden, the four dramas—*The Rheingold*, *The Valkyrie*, *Siegfried* and *The Götterdämmerung*—being played on consecutive evenings. Each performance will begin at five o'clock, and, with a reasonable interval for dinner, last until between ten and eleven.

Mr. Hall Caine, intending to take three or four months' holiday, has gone to the south of France.

The Fanatic, which enjoyed a run of four nights, had on each of its four acts a quotation—(1) "The beginning of it;" (2) "the humour of it;" (3) "the pity of it;" (4) "the end of it." "And there," says a wag, "you have the history of the piece in a nutshell, especially on the last point."

During his engagement at Glasgow, Sir Henry Irving unveiled a bust of the late Mr. J. B. Howard, the Scottish actor-manager so closely identified with the impersonation of Sir Walter Scott's characters. It represents him as Roderick Dhu, perhaps his best essay. It is interesting to recall for fact that Sir Henry and Mr. Howard were close friends, having acted together when both were comparatively unknown to fame. The latter excelled as a stage-manager, and, indeed, came to be known as "the Scottish Irving." He never missed a first-night at the London Lyceum if he could be present.

"*The Theatre*," remarked a representative of the *Western Mail* to Miss Fortescue during her recent visit to Cardiff, "insinuates that *The Fortune*

Hunter was written for Mr. Charles Wyndham." "I think I may say that it was not," was the reply. As a matter of fact, we insinuated nothing of the sort.

As many authorised statements on the subject have been made, it may be mentioned that Mr. Oscar Barrett will give both morning and evening performances of his new *Cinderalla* at the Garrick during his tenure of that theatre after the first day. Miss Dan Leno will be the Fairy of the Slipper.

THERE was a funny little incident on the first night of *The Cat and the Cherub* at the Lyric Theatre. The child engaged to play the Cherub fell ill suddenly, and a small Italian, who understood not a word of English, had to be put into the part. All went well until the time came for the villain to kidnap the boy, and then the poor mite, terribly frightened, set up a howl. The author had intended the Cherub to take his abduction quietly enough; but this unrehearsed effect roused the audience to enthusiasm, and the company at once realised how much more effective the new reading of the part was. The child-actor was instructed always to cry at this point, and the piece was strengthened by the Italian's very natural piece of realism. But almost the best of the joke is that one critic devoted a good part of his notice to pouring out eloquent enthusiasm about the wonderful acting of the kidnapped child.

SIR HENRY IRVING and Miss Alma Stanley have joined Viscount Peel, Lady Caroline Duncombe, Sir George Newnes, Mr. E. T. Hooley, and others in giving a new peal of bells to Gamlingay Church, in Cambridgeshire. The old bells are being recast to provide the new set.

WE have to announce a new and interesting theatrical management. Mrs. Mouillot (the clever wife of Mr. Fred Mouillot, of the famous firm of Morell and Mouillot) and Miss Bessie Hatton, actress and authoress, and daughter of Mr. Joseph Hatton, are forming a company, to act with them and under their management on a provincial tour which will open at the new theatre at Crouch-end on January 21, 1898, and be continued in some of the leading cities of the United Kingdom. Their *premiere* attraction will be *The Prince and the Pauper*, by Mark Twain and Joseph Hatton, a charming semi-historical romance in which Miss Bessie Hatton has made one of her most signal successes as Prince Edward, afterwards King Edward VI., and Tom Canty, the pauper lad whose resemblance to the King defied the closest scrutiny. On its first production the London critics were unanimous in their praise of Miss Hatton's performance. In the new version of the play Mrs. Mouillot is to be the Princess Elizabeth.

MRS. PRESTON (Marie de Grey), formerly well known as an actress in England, America, and the Colonies, died in October. She will be much missed in many a social circle.

THE suicide of Mr. Lethbridge Beck, of the *Two Little Vagabonds* provincial company, recalled the curious fact that many years ago there was another actor of the same name, Philip Beck, who also made away with himself. The latter, who was not related to Mr. Lethbridge Beck, was noted for his marvellous memory. He threw himself overboard while on a voyage to Australia.

THE *Manchester Courier* is to be congratulated on having secured the

services as dramatic critic of Mr. Alfred Snodgrass, to whom *The Theatre* is indebted for more than one interesting contribution.

THE "Strange Story" related by "J. M." in our August issue—that curious story of a meeting in an old country house near London with the shade of Pierre Corneille, the greatest of French tragic dramatists, who has then to reveal the great secret of his life—has, naturally, brought us a good many letters.

AN Australian correspondent writes to the author:—"Having been an investigator of psychic phenomena for upwards of five-and-twenty years, I read that story with great interest. Its authenticity appears to me to be unquestionable, for, supposing it were not the record of an actual phenomenon—as you represent it to be—but the product of your 'imagination,' I should still regard the narrative as having been impressed upon your mind by Corneille, under the favourable conditions which you offered him, namely:—(1) Perfect sympathy with him; (2) an intimate knowledge of his life and writings; (3) passivity of mind; (4) the stillness of the time and place."

"I AM not writing to discuss this subject in general, but I offer you some corroboration of the authorship of the communication. On the evening of September 26, I was sitting in a private circle consisting of four friends, a thoroughly trustworthy trance-medium of myself, and had been speaking of your experience, when Corneille presented herself, and spoke at some length on a variety of subjects, mentioning, *inter alia*, that he was *au fond* a serious person, and that once in his life he had actually meditated joining one of the monastic orders; a fact (if it be a fact) which is new to me. When he had finished his discourse, which included incidental references to Shakspere, Molière, and Racine, I asked him whether he was the author of the communication published in *The Theatre*, and he answered emphatically 'yes;' adding that the conditions were all that he could wish, and that, if you chose, he could be of material service to you. 'I gave him,' he said, 'what I have long desired to unburden my mind of, just as many spirits have come and made similar confessions to you [which is perfectly true]; for by so doing, we advance our spiritual progress here.' I said, 'Can you tell me his name?' He replied, 'No; I cannot find it in the medium's brain; but if he should meet with it in any book or newspaper, I will try to impress it on his memory, and he will give it you. That gentleman (yourself) was the first medium through whom I have been able to make that confession.'"

As Mr. Labouchere would say, "funny, isn't it?"

GAUTIER'S *Tricornes Enchanté* is to be revived at the Comédie Française, Frontin, one of the "creations" of Lafon, being played by M. Coquelin the younger.

"BY order of Prince Radzivill, upon whose estate of Ermenouville the tomb of Jean Jacques Rousseau is situated, the work of repairing the monument, which had fallen into a sadly neglected condition, has been commenced. The alterations have already revealed the fact that no coffin containing the body could ever have reposed in the tomb, and the question as to where the remains are buried is therefore brought to the front once more. The subject is exciting widespread interest throughout France." So says a London newsagency. By this time, one might have thought, it

is sufficiently well known that about the year 1817, in the dead of night, a few fanatics took the remains of Voltaire and Rousseau from the vault of the Panthéon, conveyed them in a sack to a common near Bercy, and there reburied them in quicklime. "Would to God," exclaimed one of the band, "that we could do away with their doctrines in the same way!"

Thaïs is shortly to be revived at the Paris Opéra.

M. Paderewski, who is not likely to return to London until next year, is composing a Polish opera.

The Comédie Française have acquired a picture representing an event which never happened—"The flogging of Beaumarchais in St. Lazare Prison." When the author of the *Mariage de Figaro* was attacked by a rival, he made use of some expression that was interpreted as an insult to the King and Queen. Louis XVI. wrote an order for his committal to prison on a playing-card at the gaming-table, and poor Beaumarchais was locked up. He was never flogged, and obtained his release after four days. The picture was simply a joke at his expense.

In recent duels in Paris between dramatic critics and players who have incurred censure, the former have come off victorious. M. Henri Bauer, of the *Echo de Paris*, ran M. Armand Silvestre through the arm rather badly; and M. Servanine, of the journal *Paris*, inflicted a wound upon M. Albert Carré, of the Vaudeville. No doubt these journalists recognise that the pen is mightier than the sword in some circumstances, but they evidently think it as well to keep up their skill with both weapons. It is fortunate that our customs do not resemble those which obtain in Paris, otherwise Mr. Gilbert would be engaged in fighting a series of duels with not a few dramatic critics and actors in London.

Caste has recently been played in Copenhagen, the Danish manager rendering the title by the word which in English means *Blood*. This brought down some criticism upon him, the contentions of his critics being that he had altogether mistranslated the word Robertson used. "*Tradutton, traditton*," as we all know, but the play itself seems to have come off better at the translator's hands, and it had much success.

Signor Mascagni is paying one of the penalties of greatness. Some Italian journalists seem disposed to emulate the spirit of enterprise shown in their way elsewhere. One of them lately stated that he had attempted to commit suicide—had, in fact, fired at himself three times, but without effect. "And to think," ejaculated the maestro, who thoroughly enjoys life, "that I am called so bad a shot!" But this was not all; troops of friends went to him at Pesaro, and he had to take several boarding-houses for their accommodation. "Every morning," he says with a groan, "I wonder what the day will bring forth. Before long, no doubt, I shall be told that I have gone crazy. If anything should happen to me, again, no one will believe it. My people will telegraph; others, with a shrug of the shoulders, will say, 'Oh, it is only one of his usual little jokes. I shall be considered alive long after my death. How I love these journalists!"

Dr. Ibsen is to leave Christiania next spring, and proposes to take up his abode in Germany. The dramatist has been very much annoyed lately by a clown in a Christiania circus, who has been impersonating him just as Mr.

Toole did some years ago, and making merry at his expense. This Dr. Ibsen calls "violation of individuality," but audiences at the circus continue to laugh.

WONDERS will never cease. The Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha has offered a prize of 1000 marks for a dramatic poem dealing with the past history of the Duchy and suitable for popular representation. The poem is to be "of a nature likely to awaken reminiscences of past achievements and strengthen the feeling of patriotism."

SIGNOR ZACCONI, the Italian tragedian, has done well on his tour through Austria and Germany. He returns to Italy early this month.

SIGNORA DUSE, who is resting at Assisi, is expected to appear at Rome towards the end of the year. Her health, never very good, was scarcely improved by the excitement attending her great success a few months ago in Paris.

SIGNORA VERDI died a few weeks ago, aged eighty-two. Her husband felt his loss terribly, and the state of his health gives rise to serious apprehensions. Signora Verdi had been married for more than half a century. She was herself a singer, and it was through her influence, in 1837, that Signor Verdi first won a hearing at La Scala, in Milan.

LONG ago we noticed the abnormal length of Spanish theatrical performances. It is usual to present two plays, or an opera and a ballet or two operas in one evening. The performances, beginning at seven o'clock, have usually consumed six or seven hours, the competition of managers not being so marked for the excellence of the programme as for its length. The Governor of Madrid, however, has recently discouraged the longer performances by issuing an edict that all theatres shall be closed at one o'clock a.m. precisely, violations of the order to be punished by a fine. It is well that Spanish cities are comparatively small.

MR. MAURICE GRAU is making arrangements for an opera season in 1898-99 in New York, during which he will give a complete Wagner cycle, but will not neglect the claims of Italian and French opera. He wishes to engage the de Reszkes, Mme. Eames, Mme. Melba, and Mme. Calvé.

MME. SEMBRICH has arrived in New York, but not to appear there in opera.

MR. POWER, it is understood, will be Shylock in Mr. Daly's coming revival of *The Merchant of Venice*, already announced in these pages.

AN Independent Theatre Society just started in New York, has unearthed several new dramatists with strange names, whose dramas they threaten to produce along with those of Ibsen and Sudermann Porto-Riche, Risemski and Robert Braco are the Society's discoveries. We hope they will keep them to themselves, if they are merely varieties of the undramatic decadent we know so well already. The venture began last month with *John Gabriel Borkman*. Mr. E. J. Henley, Mr. W. E. Henley's brother, has been engaged as stage manager, and it is probable that *Admiral Guinea*, the play which Mr. Henley wrote with Robert Louis Stevenson, will shortly be seen in New York as well as in London.

THE much-vexed question of the matinée hat seems to have been settled in New York. "By some unexplained method of persuasion," the *Daily News*

says, "the management of the Broadway Theatre have prevailed on lady spectators to take off their hats, or, as Commodore Trunnion would have said, to reef their topsails, during the performances. In grateful recognition of this humane concession, a hand mirror is now attached to each reserved seat, so that the ladies may see that their hats are properly adjusted when they put them on again at the close of the entertainment. The neglect to offer the ladies this little compensation may perhaps be the reason why, on this side of the Atlantic, so little progress has been made in the way of abating the annoyance caused by the matinée hat."

Mr. Richard Mansfield will present his familiar répertoire during the closing weeks of his present engagement at the Fifth Avenue. His new play, *King Wilhelm I.*, may be seen this season at another New York theatre.

Mr. Coghlan has adapted Dumas' play of *Kean*, which is to be produced at Washington shortly, under the title of *The Royal Box*.

It is interesting to know that Colonel Mathias, who led the Gordon Highlanders at Dargai, and whose short but stirring speech before the glorious charge was made will be remembered in history, is an excellent amateur actor. Simla theatricals are famous for enlisting all the histrionic talent among officers in India, and Colonal Mathias gained quite a reputation in Simla society by his clever acting in *A Pantomime Rehearsal*. Curiously enough, Lieut.-General Yeatman Biggs, who is also prominently engaged in the north-western frontier operations, has also a theatrical reputation; his Demetrius in *The Red Lamp* is excellent.